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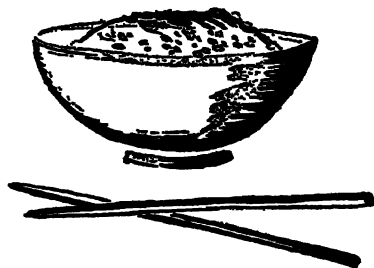
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■ In this true story of her life, Mrs.
■ Koh tells what happened to her and
— her family when North Korea became
— the center of an international tug of war.
She tells of her childhood in a small
North Korean village; of Japanese
occupation; of the shock and wonder
Koreans experienced when their Amer-
ican teachers and friends were forced
to leave as war became imminent; of
the increasing hardships under Japa-
nese rule, and the wild rejoicing when
Americans came in from the south,
Russians from the north, to "liberate"
the weary little country. Then came
disillusionment as North Koreans be-
gan, slowly, to realize the emptiness
of Communist promises.

■

The Bitter Fruit *of* KOM-PAWI



The Bitter Fruit of KOM-PAWI

BY TAIWON KOH

Decorations by Kimi Masuda



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In order to protect persons now living behind the thirty-eighth parallel in North Korea, the author has used fictitious names in many cases. The names of Americans to whom the author wishes to pay tribute are real.

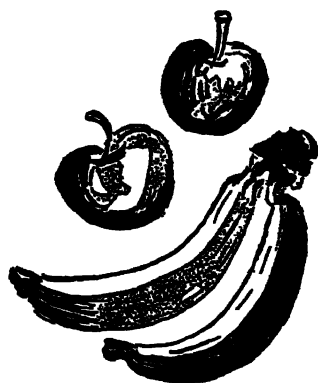
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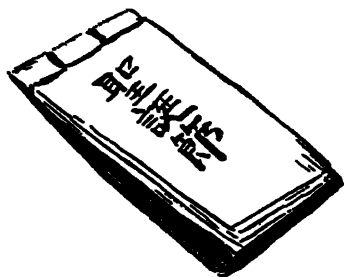
Contents

	MY CHRISTMAS LIST	1
PART I •	<i>My People Back Home</i>	
	1. FARMERS AT KOM-PAWI	7
	2. MEMBERS OF OUR HOUSEHOLD	17
	3. MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS	24
PART II •	<i>The Tightening Noose</i>	
	4. GIRLS AT PAE-WHA	33
	5. PEARL HARBOR	42
	6. WHO WILL HELP US?	51
	7. I MEET WON YOUNG	64
	8. TEACHING WHAT I PRACTICED	70
	9. REFUGEES FROM THE NORTH	81
	10. THE ONE I MISS MOST	98
PART III •	<i>America</i>	
	11. ANXIOUS DAYS	107
	12. MY MONTHS IN THE CAPITAL	116
	13. REUNION	125
	14. OUR FIRST HOME IN AMERICA	133
	15. REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE WAR	142
	AGAIN . . . MY CHRISTMAS LIST	147

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The Bitter Fruit of KOM-PAWI





MY CHRISTMAS LIST

It is Wednesday, December 4, 1957, the first day of my long vacation. For the first time since we moved into this beautiful new house I can sit here in my peaceful living room, completely relaxed, appreciating the serenity of the snow scene in our front yard as I enjoy a cup of hot tea. It has been over a year since we moved. My husband Won Young and I worked very hard to build this dream house of ours. We painted, sanded, varnished and waxed almost every night and every week-end. I can feel with my hand the wooden doors, the paneled walls and mahogany trellis. They are smooth and shiny.

Won Young has left for work. Our three children aged nine, ten and eleven, have gone merrily off to school, waving to me and throwing snowballs at one another. My mother-in-law, who has been living with us, is visiting her daughter for the holidays. I have been granted a leave of absence from my work because of a minor illness. So, here I am, all set for three wonderful months of vacation, enjoying every corner of this peaceful home to myself. To make the occasion more complete, the first heavy snow fell during the night, covering everything, including our unfinished back yard, with silvery white.

Such moments of undisturbed peace and contentment! I feel God close to me, and overwhelming gratitude warms my heart. Thoughts rush back like countless thank-you notes unwritten and letters unanswered. I yearn to speak to all my family and friends, even to strangers, who, because of their kindness, are not strange.

I have come a long way from the girl who grew up in a remote mountainside village of Korea to the woman now living in America, the most wonderful country in the world. We live in a lovely section of our town and in the prettiest home in our circle, (at least it is, to us). Won Young and I both have good work, and our three children, Kwang-In, In-Sung, and Kwang-Eal, are growing up to be fine, happy individuals.

During my long journey, I have seen the suffering of less fortunate people, those who in childhood had no chance to study and learn, those whose lives often seemed no more than dreary existence. For them, I have frequently said to myself, "Some day, when I grow up, I am going to help you."

Since I last saw those dear, familiar faces, my country has been a battlefield. To many, even poverty must now seem preferable to their new enslavement. Because of what I have seen and suffered, perhaps I can help by voicing from my heart the hope of freedom. No one is truly conquered while this hope remains. So . . . from this great country where all may think, speak, and worship as they please, perhaps, by telling my story, I can give hope to those whose lips are sealed.

Gratitude is in my heart for the many wonderful friends who have made it possible for today's happiness to be mine. For them, I have promised myself that some day, some way, I will find the words to show my appreciation.

As the years passed, I asked myself, "When am I going to help those I promised to help?" and, "When am I going to thank those to whom I am grateful?"

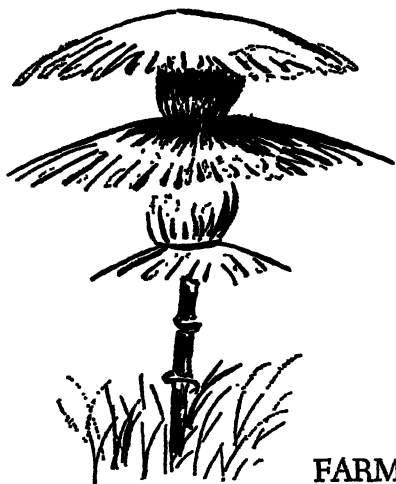
Rushing and running so fast, with my daily duties and personal problems, I have pushed these questions aside. Now, though, that I have three precious months of rest ahead, I am going to tell my story, and count each of my cherished friends as names on a Christmas list to be thanked, helped and answered.



PART I

My People Back Home





Chapter 1

FARMERS AT KOM-PAWI

OFTEN my thoughts trail back to the small mountainside village of Kom-Pawi, the place where I grew up, north of the thirty-eighth parallel. This small settlement was located in Whang-Hae Province in the middle of the country now belonging to North Korea.

But in 1945, the well-publicized thirty-eighth parallel was drawn across our land like a crimson sash, dividing Korea into two parts. North of this border the Communists ruled, while below was the Republic of South Korea. This division had started out to be purely temporary in order to make the surrender of the Japanese troops simpler. We had thought that, with the liberation of Korea from Japan, Russia and the United States would get together and help Korea establish her own government. Both Allies were welcome and respected guests. How could we suspect that those in the north had come to stay, that another small Iron Curtain would come into being?

When I was growing up in Kom-Pawi, however, we were free to come and go as we pleased, and the people who

lived in the north were no different from those in the south. I like to remember that village as it was—a place where the climate was ideal for farming, land was rich, and the people were known for their good nature and friendliness.

Kom-Pawi, like many other small farming settlements in Korea, was made up of one or two landowners' houses, marked by shiny, black-tiled roofs, and many thatch-roofed farmers' houses—thirty-two in all. It was a peaceful settlement. All of the houses were built close together at the foot of the mountains, and paddy fields and vegetable fields spread along the brook which ran through the south side of the village. It was only about three miles from An-Ak where there were churches and grade schools, and where my father's family had lived for generations. Kom-Pawi, however, was isolated by surrounding mountains. There was neither electricity nor a road wide enough for a car to pass over the hills. People kept to their ancient ways of living.

There were three kinds of farmers in Kom-Pawi. The first group owned their own houses as well as their land—just enough to farm themselves. They were very proud of this and were considered wealthy.

The second group, the largest in number, were tenant farmers who owned their houses but not their land. Lots were assigned to them, according to their ability and faithfulness, by the landowner who did no actual farming himself. There was stiff competition among the tenant farmers. They worked very hard and returned half their crops to the landlord.

The third group was the poorest. They lived in small huts belonging to the landowner, and farmed like everyone else. But they were obliged to give their services as well as half their crops to the landlord. They were called upon to repair the landlord's house, clean his yard, chop his

firewood and clear away snow. Their wives were expected to help with the washing, ironing and cooking when parties were held in the main house.

All the villagers lived very primitively. They built their own houses with the materials they could gather by hand. Lumber had to be collected for several years. A few trees had to be cut from the nearby mountains, but the simple frames were mostly made of branches gathered from the ground after storms had passed. Then they built walls with stone and clay and made floors with flat stone slabs. These stones covered several heating channels, and fires built in the kitchen for cooking sent hot air through these channels before it went up the chimney. The thatched roof was made of rice straw tied together with straw ropes. Straw mats covered the floor. Every fall, after rice was harvested, all the farmers covered their roofs with a fresh layer of straw for the winter and applied another coat of clay to the walls. As the years went on, the roof grew heavier and the walls grew thicker—keeping the house warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

I remember a riddle that went like this:

"What grows thicker with the passing years and what grows thinner?" The answer was, "It is the roof and wall getting thicker, and it is dear grandmother's waist growing thinner."

Frugality applied to every aspect of the villagers' lives. They very seldom bought material for their clothing except small pieces of red silk to use as ribbons for their daughters' hair and colorful, factory-woven garments for holidays or weddings. All of the everyday clothes were made with home-woven cotton. Women did the weaving throughout the winter with crude, primitive equipment, and even small daughters of the house helped to spin thread from raw cotton. The women either wove with white or made simple dyes from smoke, chestnut skins or acorns. For variation,

sometimes, the dyed colored threads were combined with white to make striped garments.

The men made dry-weather shoes out of rice straw and carved rain shoes out of wood. Straw was knit into farmers' raincoats as well as baskets, bags, rope, and overcoats for cows. Leftover pieces were fed to cows during the winter.

Though the farmers sold grain and vegetables at the market, they never bought food there. They ate only what they could raise and gather. The only fruits their children tasted were wild. The only sweet they knew was sugar cane. Their only sources of protein were soybeans and the fish caught in nearby rivers. Each family raised a pig or several chickens, but eggs and pork were not farmers' food. They were exchanged at the market for primitive farming tools and other necessities.

Spring was a happy season. Adults, dreaming of the plentiful harvest in the fall, were busy getting their fields ready for seeding. Boys and girls finally came out of their long winter's hibernation as the gentle spring sun thawed frozen fields and opened buds of tender greens on nearby hills.

All winter long the boys had been working with straw in their dark huts, making shoes, baskets and ropes, their heads powdered with straw dust. The girls, who had been spinning and weaving, looked pale and gray from the dusting of cotton filaments.

At the first sign of spring the children set out in search of fresh food. Boys climbed the mountains in groups to dig sweet roots, several kinds of which were edible. The favorite was arrowroot, fat with sweet juice in the early spring. To get at it, boys dug around the root, then tied a rope to it. They worked in teams, pulling together with joyful shouts and rhythmic cheers. What happy excitement when the pulling was successful—when a long, fat root gave up

its tenacious hold on the earth, sending the boys flat on their backs on the ground!

At the end of a profitable day the roots were washed at a nearby spring, cut into sections, and divided equally. The length and thickness of the pieces were carefully compared, and the sweet and bitter kinds evenly distributed. The little boys, who could not help much, got the end pieces, their first taste of sweets since the long, dreary winter began.

Girls, with newly-made baskets, went out in the spring-time to search for fresh greens. The first place they looked was along the sunny brook. As soon as water began to flow beneath the ice, they broke through the surface and pulled out wild celery roots, white and tender—the first fresh vegetable in months!

As the sun grew warmer and the surface of the fields softened, they dug dandelion, wild endive, and other weeds. They all knew which could be eaten, and the recipe for cooking each. And when adults took over the fields to seed, the girls climbed the nearby mountains to pick young leaves. Spring had arrived everywhere by now. Forsythia and azalea buds were swelling. Violets in the sun began to open. Celery grew tall. New leaves decorated their branches with dainty lacework and were everywhere in abundance.

The fifth of May by the lunar calendar fell about the end of the month by the solar calendar. This was *Tan-O*, a national holiday which corresponds to May Day in the United States. The brisk spring air and fresh food had given the children new zest. This was the time for athletic contests! Planting season was over, and the hard work of hot summer not yet begun.

Mothers sewed holiday outfits for their children and bought red silk ribbons for their daughters' hair. Fathers contributed straw which they made into strong ropes for the traditional swing that hung from the largest willow on the riverbank. The head of the village collected a small

sum of money from every family to purchase the prizes.

When Tan-O finally arrived, everything was ready. All the girls gathered by the riverbank for the swinging contest. Skirts, red silk hair ribbons and long black braids streamed gracefully in the air as the swing flew back and forth while the willow branches swayed in perfect harmony. Bells decorated with fragrant flowers hung between two tall poles, and by pulling an adjustable string, they could be raised higher and higher until only one girl could reach and ring them. She was the winner.

For their contest, the boys assembled under the shade of the big tree at the center of the village and wrestled with fervor. Loud cheers and clapping hands echoed through the village. At the end of the day the head of the village presented prizes to the winners. A sewing basket filled with silk thread was the usual prize for the girl; a baby pig, sometimes a calf, when the collection had been unusually good, was presented to the proud winner of the wrestling contest.

Summer was a busy season, but a gay one. Every member of the family worked hard—boys in the fields with their parents, girls at home minding babies and cooking meals. All the farming was done by hand with very primitive tools, and a cow to pull the plow was the only extra source of labor. Farmers helped one another by working in teams of six or seven families. They did not pay each other with money, but a day's work was returned by a day's work. Meals were prepared by the family in whose field the farmers worked that day, and more willing help was given when better food was served. Indeed, summer was a happy season. Villagers sang as they worked and had a grand picnic every day.

For the farmers there were three holidays called *Pok* which came during the hottest period of summer, every

fifteen or twenty days according to the signs of the moon. On these three days the farmers did not work. It was said that if anyone worked on Pok days, he would suffer a deadly sunstroke. Men napped in the shade while women held hair-washing parties by the river. This was an ancient custom observed by every female in the village.

It was said that if a girl washed her hair in running water on Pok days, it would grow soft and obedient like the stream. So there was good reason for the hair-washing picnic. Before the sun became too hot, the women cut plants called *chang-pu* which looked like iris and grew in abundance by the river. After the girls gathered dry branches to make a fire, the *chang-pu* leaves were boiled in a large tin container. This produced a yellowish, slippery juice that was used as a liquid shampoo.

While their hair dried in the sun, the women put rice together in a large pot and girls were sent to nearby fields to gather lettuce leaves, scallions and young green peppers. By the time the rice was cooked, all was in readiness for a great picnic lunch called *sam*, meaning "wrap," as the rice was eaten wrapped in lettuce leaves and mixed with soybean sauce. The freshly picked and washed lettuce, scallions and green peppers were placed in piles, and everyone made her own *sam* to suit her particular taste. Some liked it hot, some liked it salty, while others preferred it mild. They placed a spoonful of rice on a tender lettuce leaf, then added a bit of soybean sauce and a piece of salted fish to the center of the rice. The leaf was then twisted by bringing the edges together and wrapping the rice and sauce inside. Often, considerate fathers would send out watermelons and muskmelons for dessert.

Summer days were long. After an early supper, groups of boys climbed halfway up the mountains to feed the family cows. When they found a cool place where the grass was green they would let the cows loose to feed themselves,

while the boys sat leaning against the pine trees, playing their bamboo flutes. The sentimental melodies of Korean folk songs traveled through the hills and valleys like the sparkling stream finding its way to the village.

Even the evenings were hot. The farmers left their huts to seek a cool place where they might rest their tired feet. Smoke from burning mugwort scented the evening air and chased away mosquitoes. When the dishes were washed, the women joined their husbands, sometimes bringing with them traysful of steamed corn on the cob. As they shared the corn, they spoke of the weather and the crops. Sometimes they predicted rain by listening to the sounds of singing insects or looking at the color of the clouds. Sometimes a lasting drought was forecast by the shape and shadow of the moon.

At last the boys returned, riding on the backs of their well-contented cows. As the sound of the bamboo flutes drew closer the youngest children ran toward the foot of the hills to meet their older brothers. When they met, the little boys were allowed to ride the rest of the way home, while the little girls were given bunches of vines loaded with ripe mountain berries. Mothers awaited their arrival with steaming corn and looked on proudly as their small sons rode erectly toward them.

The fifteenth of August by the lunar calendar was a national day of thanksgiving to ancestors. Ancestor worship was the foundation of morality and philosophy for Koreans. Although every family had a different form of worship, according to its religion and education, proper respect was nevertheless paid to ancestors by all Korean families. Children were taught that filial piety was one of the most important virtues. It was felt that the respect that children had for their parents would reflect on the ancestor, and if a child earned an honorable reputation, this would bring

honor to his family and all of his ancestors. On the other hand, if he wronged his name, his family and his ancestors would be disgraced. Children were not considered as separate beings, but links in a long family chain. Ancestors were thought to be guardian angels who would constantly watch over the living generations. If ancestors were worshipped and respected, the children would be blessed.

Thanksgiving day for the ancestors was called *Chu-Suk*, and fell somewhere near the end of September or the early part of October by the present-day calendar. Since crops of food and grain were beginning to be harvested, the first gathering of each was saved for this occasion. On this holiday, everyone went to his ancestors' tombs in the mountains, carrying basketfuls of fresh-picked fruit and cakes made of new grain. Villagers, clad in colorful holiday outfits, climbed the hills as the leaves were beginning to turn yellow and red. This was a day for the entire family to get together. Even very distant relatives were assembled, since families had often been buried on the same hill for many generations. Everyone bowed his head in front of the tombs in thanksgiving for the blessings of the past year, then prayed for protection throughout the year to come.

The pilgrims returned to their village before sunset, but the celebration continued through the night under the bright moon. On the fifteenth of each month by the lunar calendar the moon was always full, and August moons were well known for their brightness. Summer heat was over and frost was not expected for two weeks. Children, excited by the reunion with their cousins, played noisy games, while adults drank freshly made rice wine and sang happily.

From October on the busy harvest began. The older children helped their parents, while the younger ones ran from field to field scavenging. When harvesting was over in one field the owner put up a stick with a white cloth tied at the end, which meant that the children were free to

come into the field for leftovers. Every bean kernel and every ear of rice dropped on the ground was picked up. Apple trees were gleaned from top to bottom. When celery cabbages were harvested, the children dug out the roots which were dried and stored away for winter. Not one piece of edible leaf was left on the field. Braided with straw and hung under a sunny side of the roof to dry, they were the main source of vegetables during the winter. Nothing escaped the keen eyes of the children, whether it was an overlooked squash or melon or a marble-sized potato.

As autumn leaves began to fall, the children climbed mountains with rakes and sickles to gather firewood. The girls raked leaves, wrapped them in large sheets and carried them on their heads for the two- or three-mile walk back home. The boys cut tall weeds and dead branches which were tied in bunches and carried on their backs. Using a *chige*, a boy could carry bundles of firewood twice his own height—a *chige* resembles a pack-rack and is used widely by Korean men to carry heavy loads on their backs. As the days grew colder, firewood became scarce on the mountain. Then the children had to walk farther and climb higher to find it. They searched all through the autumn and did not stop until the first heavy snowfall.

Winter was a leisurely season, but a hungry one. A man could farm only an average of two or three acres per family. After paying the landowner half his crop, there was not enough left to last through the cold months. Baskets, mats and shoes made by the boys during the winter were for the family's use and did not bring in any income. Women and girls spun and wove cotton, but it was for their own use, too. As the winter progressed, rice was the first to give out, then millet, corn and dried turnip tops. Even the pickles were exhausted by the end of January, and the villagers began to feel very hungry, indeed.

Chapter 2

MEMBERS OF OUR HOUSEHOLD

SINCE I was only seven years old at the time, I do not remember all the details that led to my family's moving to Kom-Pawi. I do know, however, that two of my uncles had had an import-export firm in Chin-Nam-Po, a good-sized harbor near Pyung-Yang, the capital city of North Korea. When their business failed, my father, oldest of the brothers, sold a large part of his land as well as our beautiful house in An-Ak to help pay their debts. My father could have bought a small home in the city, close to schools, or a country house with an adjoining orchard. Because an orchard was a valuable source, sometimes the only source, of goodies for Korean children, Father chose the country place. He believed in good food and the best education for the future of his children, and there were already five of us. The four years of my childhood in Kom-Pawi, before I left for high school in Seoul, filled me with a deep respect for the primitive and cordial way of farmers' lives, and at the same time laid the foundation for whatever understanding I have of the never-ending struggle of mankind for simple existence and a mouthful of food.

During our first year at Kom-Pawi, there were many unhappy days for us. To my father, this country life was a willing sacrifice for his brothers, but it was not easy for my mother, who had been brought up in one of the wealthiest families of that province. The beautiful furniture she had brought from her previous home was too large to fit into any of the rooms. It had to be left out in the front yard, covered with straw mats. There were frequent accidents. My younger brothers, not being accustomed to kerosene lamps, often hit them and knocked them over. In Korea, most families dined seated on the floor, eating from low tables which were set in the kitchen and carried into the rooms. When meals were served, the servants had a hard time taking them in and out. The doors were not wide enough to accommodate the tables we had brought from the city, and collisions often broke my mother's priceless china.

Such incidents upset my mother, and, depressed, she often retired early in the evening. My father, though, sang his favorite hymns late into the night, tapping out the rhythms on the paper door in his study while my grandmother prayed in silence. Often alone, I found refuge in the womenservants' room as they ironed and sewed in the evening, while the menservants made straw mats and bags. The women, who welcomed my visit, roasted chestnuts or sweet potatoes for me in a small charcoal stove used for heating irons. They loved to tell me their troubles, as well as fascinating tales of the legendary tigers who could dress like men, smoke and talk. So absorbed was I in listening that I laughed aloud when the stories were funny and cried when they were sad. When I returned to my room after an evening with the servants, I prayed to God to make these people happy.

One of the tales I still remember vividly was the sad, yet funny story of our sewing woman's marriage to a little

boy. She had been married to a seven-year-old when she was twenty-two.

A generation ago there was a tendency among the very poor farmers in Korea for grooms to be much younger than their brides. Girls were kept by their parents as long as possible because they were good helpers. They sewed, wove, cooked, helped with younger members of the family, and worked in the fields. Because they were so useful, boys' parents wanted daughters-in-law as soon as possible. It was customary for brides to live with their husbands' families, and even though the groom was still a child, his parents acquired a daughter-in-law. After a small wedding ceremony, called the primary wedding, the bride moved in with the family of her groom. There she remained, in a separate room, waiting for the boy to grow up. When he reached the proper age, another ceremony was held pronouncing them man and wife. In the meanwhile, the daughter-in-law worked hard for her future husband's family.

Imagine our sewing woman's disappointment when her eye coverings were removed and she saw her husband—a timid little boy, exhausted by the ceremony! Up to then she had neither seen him nor known his age.

After six months of hard work in the home of her parents-in-law, she made her first visit to her own parents, with the groom. It was almost a thirty-mile journey. The seven-year-old boy grew very tired after walking only half the distance, and the bride had to carry him on her back the rest of the way. As her home grew nearer, the boy kicked and asked to be put down. He wanted to enter the home of his wife's parents like a respectable husband. Anger and resentment overcame the bride! She refused to put him down until, reaching the doorstep of her former home, she tossed her helpless spouse at her parents' feet, saying, "Catch your son-in-law. Are you satisfied?"

This gesture did not take away her resentment. Later,

one hot summer day when she was working in the field, the little boy clad in muddy pants brought her a bag of lunch. She looked around. Since no one was nearby, she picked up her groom and threw him into a ditch—boy and lunch together. He ran home crying. Later, as the sun set in the west, tired, hungry and worried, she dragged herself homeward, thinking that she would be severely reprimanded. How surprised she was to hear her mother-in-law apologize!

"I should not have sent the little one out with the lunch," she said. "I hear that he fell into a ditch by accident and ruined the food he had brought you."

Touched by his loyalty, the sewing woman began to take good care of the boy. She made toys for him, sewed his clothes, and cooked his favorite dishes.

Years of hard work went on. The boy grew up and fell in love with a young girl whom he brought home to be served and cooked for. This was an indignity as well as extra work. The aging bride left them all and has been a sewing woman ever since!

Another evening our young cook tearfully told me the tragic story of her life. She was a pretty girl; I remember her having long black hair neatly bundled on top of her head, decorated with red silk ribbon and sky blue china pins.

When only six, she was sent away from her home to work. There were many children to care for and she worked very hard. The older boys teased her constantly. She carried the baby on her back all day while looking after the other children. She scrubbed and washed until her hands were raw and bleeding. For this she received no pay—only room and board and the promise that she would be married, have a decent wedding and an adequate hope chest when she reached the proper age.

Instead of this, her father sold her for thirty *won* (\$15.00) when she was sixteen. Even at that time, buying a wife

was a thing of the past, but it was done occasionally among the very poor to save the expense of the wedding ceremony and hope chest. When she learned of this plan the young woman was utterly dismayed. What right had her father to accept money for her, after sending her off to make her own living at six?

She did, however, have a brief period of happiness. Fortunately, her husband was kind and sympathetic, and a beautiful baby boy was born to them. But their joy did not last long. Her husband fell from a tree and injured his back while getting firewood one cold, wintry day. After many months of suffering, he died. The baby was her only hope and comfort. This, too, was taken from her the following winter when the infant became ill. From the symptoms described to me, I think that it must have had diphtheria, but her parents-in-law would not allow the baby to be taken to a city doctor. Unlearned and superstitious, they believed the girl to be the bearer of an evil spirit which had caused her husband's death and her baby's illness. To chase the evil from their home, they drew terrifying pictures and wrote warning letters which they posted by the door to warn away the evil spirit. When the baby died, the young bride could no longer bear that house. She went to the city and became a cook.

No record of the servants in our house would be complete without mentioning our faithful head cook Maks'-Mam. She came to our home when her daughter Mak-Dick was only two years old. Mak-Dick means "the last girl." When many girls were born in a poor family the parents often did not even bother to name the baby, but merely called her "the last girl," hoping that it would be the last. Mak-Dick had grown up among us and was now sixteen, a tall, slender, sweet-looking girl, learning to sew, weave and embroider. She was our favorite companion. Maks'-Mam was a jolly old lady; nothing in the world bothered

her. Having seen enough hardship in her youth, she was now determined not to worry about anything. She knew that Mak-Dick was in good hands, while she, herself, had work, a warm room in which to sleep, and food to eat. This was all she needed. Maks'-Mam was patient and kind and served our family lovingly. Often, she said that her own life with us would have been perfection had it not been for "that old grouch Hong."

Hong was unforgettable. He had come to our family as a young man, when my grandfather was a little boy. He served throughout my grandfather's life, then continued in service for my father. Both my grandfather and my father had tried to help Hong establish his own home, but he never persisted in anything long enough. He had been married, but could not get along with his wife. Though he had been given a house and a small plot of land, he did not like farming. My father bought him a cart, hoping that he might become a peddler, but Hong impatiently fought with the customers. After these brief ventures he always returned to us.

During his entire eighty years, Hong was devoted to the welfare of our household. He was loyal and very dear to us, but having known my father from babyhood gave him a sense of special privilege. At times, he was unreasonable and demanding. He had a quick temper and did not get along with the other servants, especially Maks'-Mam. He left us many times, saying that he would never return unless we got rid of her. Nonetheless, he never stayed away longer than three days. When his food was gone and he began to miss Maks'-Mam's good cooking, he returned, pretending nothing had happened as he hummed his silly old tune and carried my little brother on his shoulders.

Denying that he cared for Maks'-Mam's food, Hong often complained that she did not treat him well. I remember one special quarrel concerning male crabs. Preserved crabs

were a common dish during the winter. The female crabs were considered a delicacy, and they were packed with tasty yellow fat and served to the family. The hollow male crabs were given to the servants. One day Maks'-Mam found several male crabs, apparently alive, lined on the kitchen floor. She shouted, "What is the meaning of this? Who did this?"

Old Hong answered, "I wanted them to find their mates and bring them to me."

Disregarding the spiteful things Hong did, Maks'-Mam was kind to him. It was she who nursed him with patience and thoughtful care during the long illness before he died.

As the months passed, our family finally settled comfortably in our new home, and we all began to love Kom-Pawi and its people. The little village lay peacefully beneath the mountains, snug and unsuspecting. Its people were good natured, loving and considerate of one another. I pray that they are safe and happy now.

Chapter 3

MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

THERE was no compulsory education in Korea when I was a child, though there is now. Only about half of the boys in our village attended grade school, and nearly all of the girls stayed at home to help their mothers keep house and mind their younger brothers and sisters. Few of the adults had any schooling at all.

It was natural, then, that most of the farmers were ignorant. They had neither education nor a strong religion to guide them. All of the villagers worshiped their ancestors, but this was not religion—it was simply observing an old tradition. The villagers had not heard of Christianity until our family moved there. In the morning when we sang hymns, a crowd of curious children would stand in front of our gate to listen, whisper and giggle.

The villagers were very superstitious and worshiped a magnificent tree in the center of the village. This tree was believed to be their protector. It was decorated with colored ribbons and there was a small shrine beneath it. Every morning the villagers took turns offering it food. Once a year, a

great ceremony to the tree was held. The head of the village would announce the date, and, for a full month preceding it, everyone in the village cleansed himself by fasting from meat and fish. During this time they also refrained from gossip and made an effort not to hate anyone.

There was a legend connected with the sacred tree. In olden days there had been many tigers in the mountains, and often people were attacked by those terrible beasts. Pigs and dogs were killed, sometimes a child was harmed. Not until the villagers started to offer sacrifices to the tree, did the tigers stay away. For many years, then, no tigers had been seen. Once, however, during the month of cleansing, a woman ate fish. The following morning a tiger was sitting under the tree. The villagers questioned everyone until finally the woman confessed that her fast had been broken. The date of sacrificial offering had to be chosen again, and another whole month of cleansing was carefully observed. The tiger continued to sit under the tree watching the villagers' every move. On the morning when the cleansing was completed, the beast stood up, gravely shook his tail, and returned to the mountains.

So feared by the villagers was the tree that no one dared to touch it. They believed a certain old man had been crippled because he had broken one of its branches. The owner of the field on which it stood suffered great losses in crops. Since he dared not go within the area where it cast its shadow, branches and leaves tumbled onto the field to lie untouched.

When my father had won the respect of the villagers, he bought this field and said that, although the tree was to be kept beautiful, there was nothing about it to be feared. He trimmed it and cleared the area around its trunk. For a whole year the villagers waited in suspense, certain that misfortune would fall upon our family. Nothing happened. When the date for the sacrificial offering was set, our family

stayed on its usual diet. Villagers went to the tree every morning, expecting to find a tiger sitting under it. Still nothing happened. When a whole month passed without any sign of a tiger, the tree was no longer feared.

Wild grapevines had covered one whole side of the tree, and every fall luscious purple grapes hung temptingly from the vines. The village children stared, mouths watering, envying the courageous birds that nestled in the branches and pecked at the sweet fruit. Since the tiger had not materialized, the children now dared to approach the tree. At first, only the boldest boys would touch the grapes, and those who had eaten expected to have serious stomach aches. But when they remained in good health, all of the children ran freely to the tree. Now they not only gorged themselves, but filled huge baskets for their families as well.

Superstitions were also associated with illness. As the villagers had not learned to take advantage of modern medicine, they doctored one another. Elderly persons advised the younger ones, and years of experience enabled them to diagnose ailments and give prescriptions—usually combinations of roots and leaves. Though good results often followed, superstitious ritual frequently accompanied a prescription, such as bowing to a chimney facing east when a person suffered from a bad cold, or blowing into a rat's hole facing west when malaria attacked. One was supposed to blow twice on the second day of fever and three times on the third.

The first year after our family moved into the village we were all stricken with malaria. My father bought quinine by the hundreds of capsules. Against the advice of thoughtful neighbors, we took them and got well. Then everyone wanted to try them and were amazed at the good results. My father in this way won even deeper trust from the villagers, and some children began to come with us to the Sunday school in the city.

Much strange folklore, stemming from a combination of ignorance and loyalty, had led a few unfortunate members of the village into unnecessary suffering. There was a sweet and gentle young woman with a hair lip, who would not have it corrected because she believed that if she did, another member of her family would be born with the same affliction. A ten-year-old girl in the village had one of her good eyes covered at all times because her younger brother had suffered from a chronic eye infection since birth. It seems that one of the important rocks in their ancestors' tomb had been chipped during a burial shortly before the baby boy was born. It was believed that his bad eye was a punishment for the defacement of the rock. Therefore, his sister wore a covering on a perfectly good eye, hoping to share the penance and thus contribute to her little brother's recovery.

Babies were delivered at home without professional help. Usually the grandmother delivered her grandchildren. If there was no grandmother in the family, an elderly woman in the neighborhood was called in. The customary reward for delivering a baby was a hot meal of steamed rice and a bowl of meat soup. The old ladies did their best, but they were misled by superstition. They felt that if a baby were wrapped in an old skirt that had been worn by a rich and blessed lady, the infant was destined to have a good life in the future. Therefore, babies were often wrapped in soiled skirts at birth, and infant mortality was high. Mothers often suffered complications as well.

In spite of superstition and ignorance, Kom-Pawi had become a sanctuary for my father. He is a well-educated Christian with seminary training who had been very active with the church youth group movement. Many young people had great respect for him. His leadership, and the background of his own father, who had served a prison term for opposing the Japanese in 1910, did not please the Japanese officials. His every move was closely watched, and

he soon relinquished all hope of public service. Nevertheless, having sufficient income from his land to keep his family comfortable, he devoted himself to helping the farmers in the village.

My father built a small night school for villagers to attend during the leisure winter months. Anyone from five-year-old girls to fifty-year-old men attended, learning simple arithmetic as well as how to read the Korean alphabet. I remember how one of the slow pupils, a man of thirty-seven, after many nights of hard work, finally mastered the first ten letters of the alphabet. So proud was he of this accomplishment that, after class, he sang these letters aloud as he walked home along the snow-packed mountain pass. Everyone heard him. When such things occurred, I loved to see the expression of great satisfaction on my father's face.

During cold weather when there was not enough food, my father gave the villagers work. Every winter one of my father's fields was converted into a rice paddy. Digging two and a half feet down was necessary to change dry earth into a paddy field, and it took all winter for twenty men to complete the project. While one man stood with a chige on his back, another dug with a shovel and filled the chige with soil. This was carried away to places where it was needed. Because the ground was frozen hard, work progressed slowly. But since the field was not in use during the winter season, this was the time to do it. My father said that it paid him in the long run because it was much more profitable to raise rice than to grow millet or corn. Besides, the farmers needed winter jobs.

It was our custom to hold Sunday evening services in our front room. At first, several curious children came to see what it was all about. Later on, they returned with their friends. Then mothers began to come with the children. Gradually, fathers joined the group. Then my father introduced Christmas. Every year on Christmas Eve the front room was

packed with crowds of happy children. After a brief service, my older brother would bring in a large basket filled with packages. Each child was given one which contained two apples and two sticks of rice candy wrapped in newspaper and tied with white cotton thread. The children were delighted.

My father's generosity was not confined to the farmers and their families. Beginning two or three weeks before Christmas, he sent a servant to the fair to buy all the baskets he could find. In that region handmade baskets were scarce, and there were not too many for sale. On Christmas Eve my father filled those he had managed to buy with apples and attached name tags addressed to the poor. Then an oxcart loaded with the Christmas baskets set forth on a Santa Claus trip. Since all oxen wore bells around their necks, jingle bells literally filled the winter air.

The village farmers appreciated what my father did for them, and they tried in every way to make our lives comfortable. Housecleaning, pickling or soy bean cooking—whatever the occasion, our chores were finished by them before they started on their own. When it snowed, the snow in our yard was cleared away before we even got up in the morning.

I made many friends in Kom-Pawi. They were hard-working, sincere, and thoughtful girls who always considered their families before themselves. When they picked flowers, the prettiest ones were saved for their mothers. When they picked berries, the sweetest were carried back home for their little brothers. Even the fattest stalks of wild celery were put at the bottom of their baskets for their families.

These are the memories of my dear people at Kom-Pawi—my family and my friends. Even as a little girl, I greatly admired my father's work, and often said to myself, "I will follow in his footsteps."

PART II

The Tightening Noose



Chapter 4

GIRLS AT PAE-WHA

MY thoughts often go back to the day I left home. It was late in March, 1937, when I said good-by to the well-wishers standing on top of the hill. Since most accredited high schools were in Seoul, the capital of Korea, I traveled south to that city. It later became the capital of the South Korean Republic. Little did any of us dream that in the not too distant future Seoul would become a haven for those fleeing from the Communists—a city to be taken and retaken by both sides.

My father, who was making the trip with me, had gone on ahead to get the tickets. I walked down the path with our faithful Hong, who carried my small trunk on his back. Again and again I looked around at the people waving to me. Most vivid in my memory is my mother, who, after preparing every detail for my comfort, now wept.

She had made me many lovely new dresses and quilted blankets. In the bottom of my trunk she had packed dried sugared rice powder, explaining that it could be used to make various goodies when I was hungry. She had taught

me how to braid my long black hair myself. Now that I have children of my own, and the oldest, Kwang-In, is eleven, precisely my age when I left home, I know how my mother must have felt! When I watch Kwang-In dig into his favorite dishes or stand breathless before me, having run home to show me his schoolwork when his marks are good, the mere idea of sending him away so far makes a hot lump rise in my throat! No wonder, then, that my mother wept as she stood alongside Maks'-Mam and her daughter Mak-Dick, who was *not* going away. Other villagers were there to wish me well, including many of my girl friends who envied me. Sweet Ok-Hee, who had no envy in her heart, handed me a homemade doll and tried to hide her tears as she said she hoped I would get comfort from her gift when I was homesick.

There were not enough high schools in Korea, and admission to a well-accredited one was very hard to get. The ratio of entry was one out of five or ten, according to the reputation of the school. A week-long entry examination—written, oral and physical—was given every February. To all high-school applicants, an extra preparatory class was offered at the grade-school level. This was held from six to nine-thirty in the evening. After their hard day's work was over, Maks'-Mam and her daughter had walked three miles every night to take me home. Rain or snow, they were there with a small keresene lamp and warm food for me. Instead of counting this act as a generous favor, they were always kind and sympathetic, saying how tired I must be!

The trip to Seoul was long, starting on a bus and changing to a small local train at Chae-Ryung. At Sari-Won, we boarded the Kyung-Ui Main Liner which went directly to Seoul. Since the connections were bad it took us all day and nearly all night to get there. As we settled down, the sun began to set over the western mountains and smoke from farmers' chimneys rose in the distance. How far behind

were my home and friends! The first excitement over, tears rolled down my cheeks.

My father patted my shoulder gently and said, "Be strong, my child! Learning is our only hope. Think of all those who cannot go to high school, or even grade school, when they want to go so badly."

The school, Pae-Wha, was located at the foot of the In-Wang Mountains. The place was beautifully landscaped and flowers bloomed nearly all year round. Rose vines covered the white archways which bridged every path leading to the classrooms, while evergreen trees neatly fenced in the campus. Pae-Wha means "Cultivating Flowers," and our eight classes were identified with the names of flowers: Rose of Sharon, Chrysanthemum, Plum Blossom, Violet, Peach Blossom, Pear Blossom, Apricot Blossom and Lotus.

This school was founded by American Southern Methodist missionaries. Two of our instructors were American: Miss Lee, our music teacher, and Miss Diggs, who taught English. These women were the first Americans I had ever met. How strange they seemed to me, with their fair skin, deep-set eyes and high-bridged noses! Soon, though, I found them kind and friendly. They wore Korean costumes and spoke our language fluently. I am very grateful to Miss Diggs, who tried so hard to teach us proper English pronunciation. *Th* and *v* were the hardest for us, since there were no such sounds in Korean. Every day she made each of us bring a small mirror to class so that we could look at our lips when trying to imitate her pronunciation.

Out of four hundred and fifty students, one hundred and forty stayed in the dormitory. These were the ones who came from small, faraway towns. Those who lived in Seoul commuted from their homes. The dormitory was much like a co-operative house here in America, though we had a housemother and two cooks. The school tried to maintain the dormitory at a minimum cost, since it was quite a heavy

burden for many of the parents who had sacrificed heavily to send their daughters to high school. Our food was simple, and students did all of the buying, bookkeeping, dishwashing and cleaning. The rules were very strict.

We rose at five in the morning, washed ourselves in cold water and braided each other's hair. From six to seven we had a study period. Breakfast from seven to seven-thirty. Before school started at eight o'clock, we cleaned the entire dormitory, including hallways and bathrooms. Visits to relatives in Seoul were allowed every other Saturday afternoon, and two hours of shopping were permitted on Tuesday afternoons. Otherwise, we were not allowed to step outside the campus gate. Ten cents a week was allotted each to spend for snacks. This restriction was made in behalf of students who did not have much spending money and could not share equally with girls receiving larger allowances.

At first, we were bewildered and homesick; the days ticked by like years. Soon, though, we felt like one large family. The newcomers understood one another—weeping together when homesickness was too much to bear, worrying together when rules were violated, and sharing moments of happiness. The senior students, whom we called older sisters, were sympathetic. They comforted us when we were homesick, taught us how to wash our hair and press our dresses. After waking us in the morning, they helped us with our homework.

The school year was divided into three semesters. The first started in April and ended on July 25. After twenty-five days of summer vacation, the second semester started. Then a winter vacation of twenty days, from December 20 through January 10, divided the second and third semester. This final period was short and ended on March 25.

How well I remember July in 1937. The most difficult and lonely part of our first semester was almost over, and we were busy studying for term examinations when a news-

paperman came rushing into our dormitory shouting, "Special news! Special news! Read all about it: Japan is at war."

The man wore bells attached to his coat, and in running around and around they jangled to the accompaniment of his scraping feet.

We all dashed to see what was going on. Excited at our immediate response, the man circled ever faster, making louder and louder noises with his bells. I still think of this absurd and amusing spectacle as the way the Japanese-Chinese War started!

A week later, our school announced that the summer vacation was to begin five days early. So that trains could be used for military purposes, the Japanese officials wanted to send all dormitory students in Seoul to their homes as soon as possible.

Thus, the war to us was only an occasion for joy since we could return home early! We hugged one another, jumped up and down in glee, and merrily left for our families amidst confusion and excitement. Little did we realize that this was the beginning of frightening changes.

When we returned to school for the fall semester, some changes had already taken place. The Korean language was removed from the curriculum. It was forbidden to speak our native tongue during class hours. Visits of the Japanese school inspectors were frequent, and elderly teachers were often stopped in the middle of lectures because they were caught mixing Korean words with their broken Japanese.

In October of the same year, Mr. Kim, who had been teaching Korean literature and history, was taken prisoner. He was a close friend of my father. Indeed, the fact that he was an instructor at Pae-Wha had been the chief reason my father had chosen this particular school for me. The day of Mr. Kim's arrest, I learned that Mr. Park, who had been acting as my guardian in Seoul, had also been taken to prison. A few days later, a letter came from home reporting the

imprisonment of my father. To this day, I have found no words to express how I felt then! For the first time in my life, I was overwhelmed with fear. I felt as if something very heavy and dark were closing in around me. I could not even cry. I was only twelve, and many, many miles from home. When the first shock was over, I longed to return and comfort my mother!

Later, I was to learn that a group of well-educated Koreans had organized a party called, Tong-U-Hoe, meaning Fellowship Meeting. The purpose of this organization was to educate and train Korean young people. "Faith, Righteousness, Courtesy, Forbearance, Benevolence and Courage," was their motto. All of the members of this organization were taken to prison, including Mr. Kim, Mr. Park and my father. As their war with China went on, the Japanese imprisoned many more Korean leaders as a precautionary measure. The number of imprisonments increased as the war progressed.

My uncle came often to the dormitory to comfort and encourage me. He sent me a monthly allowance that was much larger than the one I had been receiving from my father. My uncle had often said that he could never raise his head until he had built us a house that was better than the one my father sold to help him out of debt. He did, and much more! For a whole year, until my father was released on bail, he sent my brother and me monthly allotments to continue our studies. He took care of my mother and other members of the family and started rebuilding our home to surprise my father when he returned from prison. My deep gratitude toward this uncle, as well as a strong desire to make myself worthy, drove me to hard study.

As the years passed, and the war between China and Japan became more serious, world opinion turned against Japan. The effect of this was felt by us each day. More and more violently nationalistic, the Japanese set aside the first of each month as a patriotic day. Early in the morn-

ing, before the classes started, all students were assembled in front of the Japanese Shinto shrine to bow and pray for Japan's victory. We were often made to sweep the front yards of the shrine. Our summer vacation was shortened to fifteen days, and during the first ten we remained at school to do Labor Service. We mended soldiers' uniforms, sewed their ration bags, and swept the front yards of government buildings. A military observance called The March of Flags, became more and more frequent. This was dreaded, for all the students in Seoul were made to assemble at the central field, each with a Japanese flag. An hour-long, sometimes longer, ceremony was held, and then we marched through the streets waving flags and singing victorious and patriotic songs which we had been forced to memorize. When passing the government buildings we stopped to shout, "*Banjai, Banjai.*" In order to stay in line, we had to run most of the way. This strenuous exercise usually lasted a full day, and many of us became ill.

We were frequently sent to the Seoul station to cheer up soldiers who were about to go to the front line. In school, our only written compositions were comforting letters to Japanese soldiers. Speaking Korean was more and more severely punished, not only for students, but also for civilians. All official words, such as giving telephone numbers to the operator or explaining one's destination to a ticket clerk, had to be said in Japanese. It was a common sight to see tired, disgusted old men and women pushed aside at a ticket window because they could not state their destinations in Japanese. This often occurred after they had been standing in line all day! As the number of tickets sold was limited, people even waited overnight to be at the head of the line when the window opened the next day.

The Oath of the Imperial Citizen had to be recited aloud every morning at the beginning of assembly as well as in church before starting the Sunday services.

We were forced to change our names to Japanese. Because family names in Korean represented a long history of well-respected ancestors, it was said that "changing a family name is a disgrace to one's ancestors. The man who changes his name should be called a son of a dog." Therefore, some Koreans changed their names into the Japanese for "son of a dog."

Not only did our vacations grow shorter each year, but the trip home became worse each time. Trains were usually late, and once we were inside, we discovered there was scarcely room to stand. A delay on the Main Liner often made me miss the connection to the local train, and I had to wait half a day for another one to come. The final transportation to my home was memorable! The well-worn bus which used to be run by gasoline, now had to use kerosene. Later, this fuel was replaced by charcoal, and a tall tank was attached to the rear of the bus to hold it. Before the bus could be started, the charcoal had to be red hot and all the passengers were forced to wait, sometimes for hours, while a boy vigorously fanned the charcoal. Finally, the bus got started, but it would not climb even the lowest hill. Passengers had to get off and push—and this happened four or five times before we reached An-Ak.

In 1940, the fall of my last year at high school, our American teachers, Miss Lee and Miss Diggs, had to return to the United States because of the increasing dissension between that country and Japan. We had grown very attached to them and respected them greatly. It was a sad day when they shook hands with each one of us, saying, "May God be with you always." They were leaving Pae-Wha without knowing what would happen to us, and could not hold back their tears. The school was the result of their love, struggle, courage, and their burning desire to do God's work far from their own homes in a strange land. To us it seemed that our security went with them. While the

American teachers remained we had felt safe, knowing that the Japanese would not interfere too drastically with our school.

Thus, the four eventful years of high school came to an end. Though the days ahead looked dark and grim, we were still young and optimistic. How proud we were to hold diplomas in our hands! Many sacrifices lay behind those rolls of gold-bordered papers. Some widowed mothers had come to Seoul from far away and had worked as cooks and sewing women to earn money for their daughters' education.

Graduation day was sad, especially for dormitory girls. We had grown up together, from the lost, bewildered and terribly homesick little girls with long black pigtails of four years earlier. We had shed many tears together, gone through grim days, shared our gladness, and nursed one another when we were ill. Now, we were tall and grave, ready to face the world.

Chapter 5

PEARL HARBOR

THE college I attended was the first, and for many years the only women's college in Korea. It had a long and proud history. Founded by the American Methodist Board of Foreign Missions in 1909, Ewha College was the pioneer in education, and the guiding light in darkness for Korean women. In the spring of 1941, war was imminent. The gaiety for which Ewha was known had almost vanished, leaving only traces—just enough to remind newcomers of its glorious past.

There had been many American teachers at Ewha, but they had returned to their country six months before I entered. Only their vacant rooms remained. Bare curtain rods and nail holes in the walls reminded us that the rooms had once been occupied by gaily-dressed American ladies and furnished with colorful curtains and beautiful pictures.

When I was a student there were five departments—Music, English Literature, Home Economics, Kindergarten Education and a newly added one-year course called Chun-Su-Kwa. Home Economics was most popular and nearly half the total enrollment of eight hundred girls entered this

course. At that time not many Korean women worked after college, so training in Home Economics was practical. Then, too, unlike Music and English Literature, Home Economics did not require a special talent. This was the best course for students who, like myself, could not play the piano, sing, and had not mastered the English language with any degree of fluency. Chun-Su-Kwa, meaning The Concentrated Course, was started in 1940 as part of the School of Home Economics. This was a one-year course of intensive training, which could be compared to a practical nurse's training in the United States. It consisted of cooking, sewing, child-care and home management. This course, much in demand during the Second World War, trained high-school graduates who could not afford the four-year curriculum.

Ewha was located on the outskirts of Seoul. Set on a hill surrounded by mountains, its light green roofs and pale granite walls stood serenely among tall pine trees. Next to the Music School was a beautiful chapel, and, surprisingly enough, the traditional Ewha morning service was still observed. Organ music overflowed from the chapel, filling the early morning air as we hurried down the path among the pine trees. The well-known Ewha chorus started the service, calming our souls and preparing our minds for the day. The Korean-translated Bible and hymns were still used, and singing our favorite hymns in our own language restored our hope and made life seem worth living.

Except for the morning services, college life was very dreary. Standard attire was a black uniform with a white blouse. Shoes were very hard to get, and many of us wore a single pair all through college. These were mended, patched and out of shape. However, all of us had become accustomed to shortages during the past four years. Trained to accept any kind of situation, we went about busily doing our own work.

Dormitory life was much more fun than it had been at

high school. The buildings—beautifully designed Western architecture—were well equipped. They had every convenience that could be expected in an American building, the only difference being that we had to operate below standard because of shortages. Although there was running water, with showers on every floor, we could use them only two hours a day—one hour in the morning and the other in the evening. It was, even so, a great pleasure to be able to bathe in hot water and sleep in comfortable beds. Since we paid a much higher fee than we had at high school, the food was better in spite of tightening rations.

As an added advantage, rules were not so strict. I felt almost free. We were allowed to go outside the campus every day after school, as long as we returned before seven in the evening. Since there was no early morning study period, we could remain in bed until six-thirty. Our letters were not censored. Receiving a love letter from a boy friend was no longer considered the great crime it had been in high school.

We were now allowed to go to the movies and restaurants. In high school, such activities would have meant suspension, while attending a theater or going to a restaurant with a boy had been punishable by expulsion. Naturally, we rejoiced in breathing the free college air.

The year I entered Ewha, in 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked. News of the event came to us with deadly quietness! On the morning of December 8 we all rushed into the main building to warm ourselves after the cold walk from the dormitory. We gathered at the bulletin board to see if air raid drills had made any changes in our schedule. There it was . . . a newspaper clipping announcing the attack, telling of a Japanese submarine that had been sunk in the vicinity. There was no music in chapel that morning. Everyone was afraid to talk. The entire school was dreadfully quiet.

Even the Japanese teachers made no comment. During the afternoon, one of them broke the silence and said, "This morning, my wife and I were listening to the radio. When the Pearl Harbor attack was announced, we could not believe our ears. Neither of us could speak a word. Then my wife broke into tears and knelt in front of the miniature shrine in our front room. She said, '*Kamisama, Kamisama, help us!*' I—I came to school without breakfast. . . ."

That was all.

From that day on we were swept into a never-ending turmoil which lasted until the school doors closed two years later. Still, those years were most valuable ones. I would not change them for anything. The teachers and friends who went through that crucial time at Ewha together hold a special meaning for me. We were undivided, like people aboard a stranded ship. We would reach our destination together, through deep and mutual understanding.

A few days after Pearl Harbor I received a letter from home saying that my father had again been taken prisoner. At midnight, before the attack had been announced, many Korean leaders had been taken to prison to make sure they would not start a revolt. This was called "precautionary confinement."

My older brother who was studying in Japan had, a few months previously and for the same reason, also been arrested. My mother was not well and the future looked very dark. All of a sudden I lost courage. I packed everything to go home. Life did not seem worth the struggle, and I wanted to be near my mother to comfort her and, in turn, to be comforted. Who knows, I thought, I might have to go to prison, too. My brother, still a boy, has done nothing. He is in prison only because he is the grandson of my grandfather and the son of my father. I reasoned that, since I did not know what might happen to me or to my family, I was

justified in doing whatever I wished, while I could. What I wanted most was to be with my mother.

After spending a sleepless night, I went to school and explained to my teachers that I was leaving. All of them comforted me and tried to persuade me to stay. One of them finally convinced me that it was best to continue school.

"The more troubles with which we are faced," she said, "the more important it is to have higher education. Knowledge is the only thing that cannot be taken from us. We will need it. Do not be discouraged by temporary despair. It will pass, but if you give in to your grief now, regret will last throughout your life."

She patted my shoulder gently and wiped my tears away. I stayed on. Since then, many years have gone by and many things have happened. How right that teacher was! I have twice lost all my belongings, once when the thirty-eighth parallel was drawn across my country, and again during the Korean War. Always, though, my education remained with me, an impetus and guide, no matter where I was or what I did. My gratitude toward that teacher has become greater with the years.

During the first months after Pearl Harbor, the war looked favorable for Japan. Tension eased, and many Koreans who had been confined were released. My father was again permitted to return home, having received several injunctions concerning his future behavior. He was to change his name to Japanese, resign from his post as an elder in the church, hang pictures of the emperor, the crown prince, and their palace in our front room, and dig up the rose of Sharon bushes, the Korean national flower, from our front yard, and replace them with cherry blossoms!

It was not too long, though, before the United States began to push the Japanese forces back. A few Korean scholars who had remained at Ewha, devoting themselves to

research in the history and literature of our country, were forced to resign. Later, some of them were imprisoned. Our favorite subjects were replaced by Japanese literature and Japanese history, taught by ever-increasing numbers of Japanese teachers. We had no choice of subjects. The compulsory schedule consisted of seven hours of lecture and lab work, Monday through Friday, and four lectures on Saturday. Anyone failing simply dropped out.

Morning chapel services, so precious to us all, changed gradually. The Korean-translated Bible and hymnal were replaced with the Japanese translation. Praying in Korean was forbidden. Saying prayers in a foreign language was most difficult, perhaps because special vocabularies are often used in prayers. I have not even yet learned to pray in any language but Korean. Though the Japanese prayer read in the chapel had much the same meaning that it would have had in Korean, the warm atmosphere was no longer there. Even though we complied with rules and orders in every way, the chapel was more and more often invaded by Japanese school inspectors. Services were eventually discontinued altogether.

Worship was replaced by a ceremony similar to military training. Regardless of the weather, we assembled in the school yard each morning and were called the Ewha Regiment. We dressed like soldiers, were given sharp orders, and had to stand in line. The first order of the day was to recite the Oath of the Loyal Japanese Citizen, which had to be shouted, because if the oath lacked volume or enthusiasm, the Japanese inspectors made us repeat it. We then bowed many times—a medium-sized bow to the Japanese flag, the deepest and longest toward the Japanese emperor and his palace, and an extra, silent bow for the victory of Japan. As the war became more bitter, the number of bows was increased.

Visits to the Japanese Shinto shrine became more frequent—they now took place on the first, seventh and fifteenth of every month, as well as on all holidays and days commemorating various victories. Even when we took shortcuts over the hills, it was almost a four-mile walk to the central shrine. We marched in military fashion from the school in a long double line, and by the time we reached the foot of the shrine we were already exhausted. With food rationing getting worse all the time, many meals consisted of only a bowl of stewed radish tops mixed with rice, which did not provide much energy. Climbing up the three hundred steps to the shrine was torture, and I, being the tallest girl in our class, had to carry the heavy school flag. It used to take almost a week to recover from those trips. When they occurred during final examinations, we had to set out at five-thirty in the morning in order to be back at the college on time. Hands and knees trembling with fatigue, we sometimes were too exhausted to write the answers on our examination papers, even though we knew them.

Our school never succeeded in pleasing the Japanese school inspectors, regardless of our efforts to conform. They were frequently present at assembly and peeked into classrooms while classes were in session. The elderly teachers trembled! Japanese words completely slipped their memories as the sharp, hostile eyes bored into their faces.

We had learned to read our teachers' expressions very well. When one of them could not finish a sentence, we finished it for her. Though the warm smile of our beloved president, Dr. Helen Kim, never wavered when she greeted us in the morning, we could sense by the tone of her voice and the way she walked whether or not the Japanese were somewhere around to create another crisis. On such days we said the Oath of the Loyal Japanese Citizen very loudly and were particularly careful all day. If, on such an evening, we

happened to meet our president walking among the pine trees, she would softly say, "Thank you, children — well done."

In spite of our efforts it was announced in December, 1943, that Ewha was to discontinue college education at the end of that fall term, and all students would learn to be teachers for the Women's Training Schools during the winter term. There had never been such training schools, but they were to be started the following spring. We were told that during this national emergency there was no time for studying music, literature or homemaking, but only for work that was closely related to final victory.

Confronted with this news the entire school seemed like a funeral home. Ewha to us was not just a college. It had opened new doors, given us new hope, freed us from ignorance. Ewha was our ideal. We loved its proud history and its beautiful tradition—a tradition born of the mixture of two cultures—the free, spontaneous, Western attitudes and the gentle obedience which was an oriental woman's virtue. Every measure had been taken to preserve the beauty and the love which was Ewha's heritage. Although it would have been easy to hand the entire administration of our school over to the Japanese to let them do whatever they pleased, this would have destroyed the great love and pride of our people for Ewha.

An atmosphere of sorrow prevailed and no one could speak. If we could have communicated to one another our hearts would have been lighter. The simple, short address given by our president brought tears to our eyes, for we could read into it many things that remained unsaid. Now, our hymns and school songs sounded like cries of anguish.

On the last day of the fall term we signed a statement saying that we would return to become teachers at the Women's Training School. We were promised the following

privileges: Any student finishing the three-months' training would receive a certificate of accomplishment in her present grade and be granted first priority for readmission when and if the school reopened on its former status. A temporary diploma would be issued to all members of the senior class who satisfactorily finished the training. The following fall this paper would be exchanged for a regular diploma when we presented our reports on teaching experiences.

Though these plans sounded fair enough no one was certain of anything. We did not know what kind of instruction we would receive or who would train us. We had no idea what we were to teach or where we would be sent, or whether the Japanese would keep their word. They could change their plans easily and we could be sent anywhere! As for our beloved school, we had not the least idea what would become of it after the training period. One thing was clear, though: We would not meet many of our teachers again when we returned. Defeated and disheartened, we all left for winter vacation, hoping to receive comfort from the warmth of our homes and parents.

Chapter 6

WHO WILL HELP US?

WHEN I returned home I found the household in sadness. My older brother, Tai-Bong, had come home during the summer after two years imprisonment in Japan. During his confinement, food had been very scarce, and the Japanese, themselves, were nearly starving. Needless to say, Tai-Bong looked dreadful. His pale skin stuck to his tall frame, his saddened eyes were sunk deep into his narrowed cheeks.

Once, quite casually, he said, "I discovered the way to bear hunger while I was in prison. When our daily ration of rice was allotted, I ate half, and the rest I spread inside my prison uniform where body heat dried and hardened it. The rest of the day I picked and chewed the grains, one by one."

He was terribly thin. His shrunken body could not hold any food, and in spite of all the efforts that our family and he, himself, made, the two years of near starvation during adolescence had caused too much damage to mend easily. He was very ill.

I noticed a change in my younger fourteen-year-old brother. Something deeply troubled him. Though he was a quiet, sensitive boy, the love of life had always shone in his eyes. Now Tai-Am had retreated into deep silence, except for occasional sighs, and his eyes held only sadness. Gradually, I began to understand his torment. When the news had been delivered to us that the first son of our family had been taken prisoner, it was a blow to all of us, especially to Tai-Am who idolized his older brother. I had often seen him crying in the night, covering his head with a quilt and holding Tai-Bong's picture tightly to his chest. At that time he was only twelve, and he wept for an older brother who used to play the village clown. Tai-Bong was six feet tall and had a grand sense of humor. When he used to come home for vacation, the little village boys would follow him around, choking with laughter at his silly tricks and funny stories. How proud of him Tai-Am was!

The day his hero returned from Japan, pale and emaciated, the youngster's heart sank. But he hoped that Tai-Bong would soon recover his health by eating lots of good food, and regain his zest from the warm care of a loving family. This had not happened. His beloved brother was sick in bed most of the time.

That year, 1943, the Japanese were becoming desperate. They had started to draft Korean boys into their troops. In An-Ak the boys' high school was like an army camp. More than half of the school hours were devoted to combat practice. It was rumored that the entire school would soon be sent to the front line. How could the sad youngster fight for the country that had ruined his brother's health? This unanswerable question caused the struggle within Tai-Am's sensitive mind.

One bitterly cold night, after midnight, I heard a knock on my bedroom door. When I opened it I saw our little

house girl standing there, shivering and looking thoroughly frightened. She spoke in low tones, "Hurry! Hurry! You may be able to stop him! Your younger brother is running away."

I slipped quickly into a coat and tiptoed across the yard. The moon was so high and bright that the ground appeared to be covered with snow. Small for his age, and with a khaki-colored sack slung over his back, my fourteen-year-old brother clutched the front gate as if it were his last hold on life. I touched him gently on the shoulder.

Startled, he turned quickly to face me. Tears welled in his eyes.

"You cannot go without saying good-by to me," I whispered. Then, with his hand in mine, I added, "Why, your hands are cold. Come to my room and tell me about it. I promise to let you go after I hear your plans, and I will not say a word to the rest of the family."

After a brief hesitation Tai-Am obeyed. I had no sooner closed the door than we clung to one another and wept, Tai-Am's small body shaking, his fists hard-clenched. He told me then what had been on his mind.

He was running away to join the Russian Army. He could not bear the thought of being drafted into the army of a nation that had treated his brother so badly. He would rather join an army that would fight against Japan. Tai-Am told me that he had conceived this idea the day Tai-Bong came home. From that time on he had planned in secret, but now that I knew, he seemed eager to share the details.

From his pocket he produced a worn, ink-stained map showing the distribution of Chinese and Russian armies, the only foes of Japan that he could possibly reach on foot. The Chinese had been driven far to the south, leaving the Japanese in control of the entire Manchuria area and North China. It seemed hopeless to try to penetrate through that

vast expanse. On the other hand, Russia was just across the Tu-Man River at the extreme north tip of Korea. He thought that if he could cross the heavily-guarded river without being caught, he could reach Siberia. He had heard rumors that Russia was planning to attack Japan in the near future, and that Koreans who managed to cross the border would be welcome to join her armies. He had waited until winter so that the river would be frozen hard, and, with one of his classmates, he intended to walk to Chae-Ryung and buy a railroad ticket to the end of the line.

After telling me this much Tai-Am showed me the contents of his sack, which included a cup, brush, a cake of soap and towel, a picture of himself and Tai-Bong, and a bag of chestnuts, cooked, peeled and dried hard. He had read an article written by one of our ancestors which said that chestnuts prepared in this way were the best kind of food on a long journey. They contained a long-lasting, concentrated form of starch. My brother had asked our little house girl to prepare the chestnuts for him, after begging her not to tell anyone. She had kept her word until the actual sight of him leaving was more than she could stand. I praised Tai-Am's courage and careful planning, but there were a few important details unexplained.

"How do you intend to buy the train ticket?" I asked. At that time tickets were impossible to get without a certificate, issued by the local government, stating that the trip was important. "How do you expect to cross the border when it is so heavily guarded by Japanese soldiers?"

Tai-Am looked directly at me as he said, "I have been praying hard every night to be guided safely."

After a moment's pause, I said, "Yes, God always answers our prayers, but he does this in His own time, in His own way. He does not tend to all our prayers at once, and exactly in the way we want. Sometimes we pray for the

wrong things without realizing it. I do not think He approves of any deed planned out of resentment and hurt feelings and I am sure that in time He will lead us to a better solution. Let us have faith in Him and live from day to day by doing our best to bring whatever happiness we can to ourselves and our loved ones. Actions taken in hatred always bring destruction."

Then I explained to my brother that running away would not solve his problem, but only cause us sorrow. I reminded him that he was heedlessly risking a life which brought happiness to many people, and urged him to think of how Tai-Bong would feel when he found out that he was the cause of this rash and impractical action. I reminded him that we were *all* helpless to change the present situation, and that we should do our best not to add to the sorrow of our loved ones. After our talk we walked down the hill together, and he explained his change of plan to his waiting friend. My brother and I decided to keep the matter to ourselves. Added to all our other troubles, it would have been more than my mother could have borne.

Before I returned to Ewha I spoke to my father about Tai-Am when we were alone. I asked him to watch over him while I was gone. Then, for the first time in my life, I saw tears in my father's eyes as he said, "Must he, too, go through all that pain?"

In spite of my concern for the family, I returned to Ewha in January. Some of my friends did not come back for training, but most of us were there. We had decided to stick it out to the last. Those next three months were like living in an army camp, with all of us in a single regiment—a regiment divided into four sections with a head sergeant assigned to each. We stayed in the dormitory with the ten teachers who had remained to instruct us. Every morning we lined

up in the hallways to be inspected. The head sergeant called out, "Attention!" as our teachers marched by. In a way, it was rather fun.

Those confused and uncertain months passed quickly. Our only consolation was to see that President Kim still held on to the school, but she looked smaller and more wistful every day, even though she still maintained her gentle smile at all times. As long as she was with us we felt secure.

March 25, 1944, was a day to remember. It was then that all students at Ewha—from freshmen to seniors—graduated. No one was expected to return for the spring term. The graduation exercises were attended by all of the alumnae who could possibly come, as well as those teachers who had been forced to resign. Though the auditorium was packed, this was different from other commencements in that there was not the slightest air of festivity. Everyone was dressed in dark-colored garments, and all spoke in low voices.

After certificates for teaching had been given us, Dr. Kim gave a short address, "Wherever you are, whatever you do, don't forget that all of you are precious petals from the blossoms of Ewha. Distill the loveliness of the blossom's purity and fill the air with its fragrance. Time will reveal the full-grown fruit."

She paused, then continued softly, "This is, indeed, a unique graduation, and this is why I hope from the bottom of my heart that God may soon let us be back together again. Many of you are still too young to be sent out into the difficult and deeply troubled world. . . ."

Here, Dr. Kim was so overcome that the end of her sentence could not be heard.

After that, students, teachers, the alumnae, parents and guests stood and sang the school song. Our fervor that morning still rings in my ears.

A few days after I left Ewha, one of my teachers sent me a poem written when he was alone, straightening his desk a few nights after graduation. This is my translation:

*The pale moon
Casts the shadows of tall pines here and there
On the snow-covered school yard.
All so quiet!
Woo-shoo-shoo, the sound made
By the wind passing through the pine branches
From time to time,
Breaking the deadly silence as though
Sighing for the laughter once they used to hear.*

During that crucial period we acquired a deep understanding and trust in one another. On depressing days we would tiptoe through the hallway to Ok-Soon's room when all the lights were out and the entire dormitory seemed to be asleep. We often met there because this room was the farthest away from the housemother's, and we could usually see one another by moonlight from the three attic windows.

It was then that we really talked—in our own language and of what was in our hearts. Sometimes we just sat and looked at the moon. Sometimes we sang our favorite songs and hymns very softly. We shared our knowledge of Korean history and poems, for this was the only way we had to learn these things. We helped unwind one another's heart-aches and problems, spoke of our ambitions, dreams and plans. We discussed the world situation and the future outlook for our country. The most frequently recurring topic was, *Where is our hope?*

We all were sure that the war was going to end soon and that Japan would be defeated. Then, we asked, what will happen to Korea? We all wanted independence, and yet our questions and answers went much like this:

"Do we have enough strength to stand on our own? We have no military power to defend ourselves . . . no government to run our country. . . . We do not even have organized forces to chase the Japanese back should they decide to remain in Korea."

We would bring up all the hopeful information we had gleaned from various sources, and assured ourselves that we would be able to organize our own government when our political leaders came out of hiding.

Such speculation would give us hope, but then doubt returned again as we continued, "Government alone cannot build a country, and Korea does not have anything of her own any longer. . . . We will have to have help in defending ourselves and establishing a new economy."

Again we considered, *Who will help us?* China? China had troubles enough of her own. The United States? Possibly the United States was our hope. But why should she want to help? Korea is so far away, so small. Americans might not even know Korea exists separately from Japan, the enemy of their country.

Then those who were more enlightened in world affairs would say, "Americans do know about our country and her suffering under the Japanese oppression. I've heard that many Korean leaders are staying in the United States, waiting for the proper time to return. They have been working hard to let the Western nations know that Korea wants independence from Japan."

"But do they care enough to help us? The United States is so large, so rich, and so self-sufficient. They neither want to be interfered with, nor do they want to interfere in the affairs of other nations. . . ."

"No, that is wrong," another would put in. "Look at the present war in Europe. The United States is helping the nations invaded by Germany, isn't she? It is true she would

gain nothing by helping Korea, but the United States is a God-believing country and wants to help less fortunate nations."

While many of us realized that the United States was our hope, others were skeptical. Always, in these talks, Russia, too, would be mentioned as a possible ally. Russia—would she help? We all agreed that Russia had good reasons for wanting to help Korea. First of all, Japan had been her enemy for a long time and Russia might want to get even. It was the humiliating defeat of Russia during the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 that gave Japan control over Korea.

Someone would then speak up, "But Russia might want to control Korea just as Japan has. Don't forget, Russia has always been after good harbors, and we have them!"

These discussions went on deep into the night.

Some of the students who had come from the northern tip of the country would give us encouraging information. They mentioned the political leaders who had crossed the Tu-Man River and reached Moscow by way of Siberia. Many of them had joined the Russian military forces, believing the promise that Russia would help Korea become independent. So, we reasoned, there would be enough leaders and trained men to organize our own military forces and defend ourselves when these patriots returned from Russia.

We knew little about communism. For a long time Japan had been afraid of the Communist influence. No books or articles concerning communism were available to us. The Japanese were especially strict in this matter, suspicious that the Russians planned to spread their doctrines, and any Korean discovered possessing a book about communism or discussing the subject was put into prison and called an "Ideological Criminal." Many Korean leaders who were con-

fined by the Japanese for other political reasons also came under the same heading. No wonder those of us who gathered together for our midnight talks in the moonlight were confused. We did not even know the difference between patriotism and communism. All that mattered was that both patriots and Communists were equally hated by the Japanese and punished in the same way. To us, all who were willing to put down the hated Japs were heroes!

Ok-Soon was particularly influenced by Communist philosophy. One night, when I had told her about my heartaches, she told me her family history. Since her father could not tolerate living under Japanese rule, he had escaped to Moscow with several of his friends when Ok-Soon was only a year old. She did not remember him at all, but she had heard so many wonderful things about him that her only wish in the world was to see him again. She had a mother and an older brother who, although well-educated, was not allowed to do any public work because of the father's history. Deprived of his means of livelihood, he became a recluse. He shut himself up in a small cottage within the family orchard and raised fruit and read books. He would neither come out of the orchard nor receive visitors. Her mother lived alone, counting the days until Ok-Soon would return home for vacation. Whenever we talked about Russia and the Korean leaders there, Ok-Soon's eyes would light up with hope.

When the war ended in August, 1945, and Russia occupied the northern half of our country, many of my classmates and their families fled to Seoul rather than live under Communist rule. From them I heard what had become of Ok-Soon. Her father returned with Russian officials to Pyung Yang, the capital of North Korea, as an interpreter and advisor. Later he was installed as one of the top officials of the government in North Korea. When Ok-Soon heard

of her father's return, she immediately went to meet him. There, she was appointed the head of a women's political organization and was very active working for the North Korean government.

How can she be judged for this—what else could she have done? All of her life had been devoted to waiting for her father's return. During those lonely years she had idolized him as a courageous patriot. I could not help thinking that there must have been many similar cases behind the Iron Curtain—misguided, but courageous young men burning with youthful patriotism, seeking desperately for a possible way to rid themselves of Japanese oppression.

I do not believe that most of those Koreans who came back to Pyung-Yang with the Russian officials knew of Russia's real intention. No one could have predicted at that time the tragic fate of a divided nation—of a bloody war in which my people fought against themselves, destroying everything that was precious to them.

I remember seeing a large crowd of people waiting in front of the Seoul station during the first few days after the surrender of Japan. They waved large flags, both American and Russian. They called and shouted with joy, "Welcome America! Welcome Russia!" We neither knew nor cared which ally was coming or where he would stay. We were merely grateful to be liberated. I believe that there must have been many of those unfortunate people among the North Korean government officials who did not know what they would be ordered to do. When they found out, it was too late—they could not escape from the Communists and they were not accepted by their own people.

My prayers often include Ok-Soon and her father and many, many others who must have been misled. What torture must be theirs, who had found themselves unwittingly in a position of betrayal, feeling the resentment of their

people despite the fact that all their lives had been spent working to bring what they thought would be happiness to Korea.

Many of my countrymen were misjudged for acts performed in love and wisdom. After the war was over and Ewha had reopened, I heard people criticizing Dr. Kim, saying that some of the changes she had made had not been necessary. Whenever I heard those remarks, I burned with a strong desire to speak up for her, but I was a young girl, and who would heed my words? I knew that everything she did was because she loved us and our school. It was she who gave us hope and strength through many sleepless nights when we were going through so many crises. It was for us and for Ewha that she held on through all the troubled years. It was love for our school that gave her the wisdom to accept all the changes the Japanese insisted upon.

Yet Dr. Kim was sometimes daring. On the last night at Ewha, before we all set out for the Women's Training School, she allowed us to sing our favorite Korean hymn, then banned by the Japanese. This was written by a Korean, Mr. Nam Kung Ok, and the following is my translation:

Three thousand Lees of peninsula
Beautiful land, our land, given by God.
Our Father is calling us workers
From all corners of this land.
And there is much work to be done in this land.
Who will answer His call today?
It is us! It is us! Let us go! Let us go!
To work for our land, three thousand Lees of our land.
We received a call from God! Let us go! Let us go!
To work for our land, beautiful land.*

*Korean, used for measuring distance.

Today, after many years have passed and I have grown from the teen-aged girl whose dreams were to serve my country, to an ordinary mother who thinks of her children's safety before anything else in the world, the casual humming of our school song still brings tears to my eyes. The smiling, gentle figure of Dr. Kim, with her never-flagging courage gives me strength when I am in despair. The thought of her inspires me to carry on even when sorrow is deepest!

Chapter 7

I MEET WON YOUNG

THOUGH there was much sorrow and frustration my last three months at Ewha, something happened that was to bring me my future happiness. One Sunday morning as I was getting ready to go to church, my head heavy with worry about my brothers' and my own uncertain future, the loudspeaker suddenly announced that my father was downstairs. I ran down the stairway three steps at a time and dashed into the drawing room.

"Father!" I cried, "is anything wrong?"

He gazed back with a warm smile and said, "Dear child, things cannot go wrong all of the time. Happy events do happen in one's life, even when things look darkest!"

As he spoke, his expression hinted at some special reason for his unexpected arrival. I sat beside him while he explained. Dr. Whang Kyung Koh, Head of the Home Economics Department at Ewha, had written to my parents inviting them to come and meet her parents and family, and expressed their wish and hers to introduce me to her brother, Won Young Koh. This young man had finished

medical training at Severance Union Medical School and was then taking graduate courses in surgery at Kyoto University in Japan. He was returning soon for a vacation, and his family wanted my parents to give permission for me to meet him when he arrived.

My father had come to Seoul in answer to this letter and had been apparently very pleased with the meeting. "For my part," he said, "I have done my utmost to find out about Won Young and his family . . ." Then, though he looked as if what he had discovered pleased him, he added tactfully, "Now, it is up to you two young people."

Won Young was delayed. It was difficult to get tickets from Japan to Korea, for one of the largest ferry boats between Shimonoseki and Pusan had been sunk not long before. Now regulations and investigations were painfully thorough, and Won Young failed to arrive before I left for An-Ak to teach at the Training School there. By this time, however, we had exchanged letters and photographs.

In early April my father received a letter from Won Young, saying that he had finally arrived in Seoul and would visit us in a week. An air of excitement filled our house. My mother fussed about, getting silverware and furniture polished; she pressed and repressed my dresses. My father called in his tenant farmers to repaper doors and put a wax sheen on the floors. My little brothers and sisters amused themselves by trying to guess what Won Young would look like, and betting on their predictions.

Finally he arrived. Though this was our first meeting as well as his first visit to my home, my family felt as though Won Young were one of us. At first my little brothers and sisters wouldn't leave him alone. They escorted him all over the village, proudly showing him its sights.

One afternoon when we were strolling in our orchard, which was laden with the scent of peach blossoms, Won Young told me of his difficulties in traveling from Japan

to Seoul and from Seoul to Kom-Pawi. It had taken him over two months to get a ticket from Japan to Korea, and I already knew the rural traveling problems too well. These had become progressively more complicated as the war went on. Won Young told me that people in the train had been packed as close as matchsticks. Preparing to get off, he saw a woman with a baby and child trying to push her way out. He offered to help by holding the baby for her. When their feet finally touched the platform and the air was fresh and sweet again, Won Young discovered that he was wet all over, the baby had lost his diaper in the crowd! Won Young was not rewarded for this act of gallantry, either, for the local train had been delayed and he was forced to wait four hours, pacing up and down the cold station floor. When his train finally arrived, Won Young was so excited that he pulled off the khaki cap, which was compulsory for all young Korean men to wear, and started to run. But before he could reach the train he was stopped by a Japanese policeman. Upon removing his cap, he had revealed a mop of long dark hair that defied an order for all young Korean men to keep their hair short. That the young man had been letting his hair grow to make himself presentable to my family, found no romantic response in the heart of the station guard. Won Young was forced to answer many questions and to show all of his credentials before the policeman would let him go. He missed the train and had to wait another half day for the next one.

The final bus trip was a further ordeal. Won Young and all other passengers watched impatiently as the boy vigorously fanned the charcoal tank. One by one, the passengers began to help him with anything they could pick up from the station floor—a magazine, a piece of cardboard, newspapers. Although the charcoal grew red hot and the bus started, the passengers had to get off several times in order to push it over the hills.

When Won Young finished telling me about these ordeals, he bashfully broached another subject. "Since the journey here is so difficult," he said, "and since I cannot come to see you often and am unable to stay much longer, will you accept my small gift now?"

When my silent nod said that I would, Won Young handed me his Bible wrapped in pink silk. It contained a little note that said, "I will try to be true to you as this Bible has taught me."

So our engagement was announced to my many relatives in An-Ak, and Won Young left for Seoul after bowing deeply to them all day long. We wrote long letters to each other, as we had much to learn. Won Young wrote, "Getting to you is as difficult as reaching a girl on the moon. So, when I come to you next time, I will have to bring you back with me. Now, knowing that you are there, I cannot put off the next trip much longer."

I gave in to his plea and our wedding date was set for the end of May, only a month and a half after our first meeting.

Sewing women were called in to stitch dresses for my trousseau. To make my departure seem more real, my brothers pasted a picture of an express train on my hope chest. The sewing women wanted to know how tall Won Young was, and I realized that I had not noticed. Then, I suddenly remembered Won Young hitting his nose on the edge of a lampshade when he got up abruptly to answer my father. I ran to the lamp—the edge of the shade barely touched the top of my head—and I smiled with great relief. My brothers had been teasing me all the while, saying that I would never be able to find a boy taller than I, for I was five feet six—very tall for a Korean girl. So I said to myself triumphantly, "I did not even have to look for him; he came all the way from Japan to me."

When our wedding was only a week away, Won Young wrote, "Time is running short, and I want to know so much

more about you. Tell me of your ambitions and your ideals for our marriage."

I replied, "Let us build the highest, mightiest tower in the world. You will be that tower, and I will be the sturdy base rock, supporting you with all my strength and wisdom."

But Won Young did not want the symbol I had offered. He wrote back and said, "I appreciate your kind wish to support me, but if I rise alone and you stay beneath all the time, I will be very uneasy and lonely up there. You be a tower, too, and stand beside me. Let us be removed from the old traditions that considers a woman less than a man. We both have had good educations and were brought up by the most understanding and wonderful parents possible. If you and I cannot break the confining chains of tradition, who can? The tower built by our marriage does not necessarily have to be the highest and the mightiest. Let us rise happily together, as high as we both can reach."

I gave my promise to try to stand beside him.

We were married quietly in one of my uncle's beautiful gardens in An-Ak. Ours was a small wedding, but a happy one, full of joy and hope. Flowers were in full bloom everywhere as I stood in my wedding dress beside Won Young. Although my older brother was still convalescing, he looked almost well in his best suit. And my younger brother's eyes shone with joy at the thought of gaining another big brother.

Won Young and I were very young when those vows were exchanged, he twenty-two and I eighteen. Thirteen eventful years have passed since then, but the words written in the last letters before our marriage stated the theme that has influenced our lives. Won Young, with his tireless strength and unchanging determination has continued a course of steady advancement, while I have had to stop, then run again, stop and run. I have not yet caught up with him. Still, it has been his gentle strength that has raised me

to where I am now. Whenever I have been tired or ready to give up, Won Young's voice has always urged me on:

"Come on, darling! Where are you? I can't see you up here."

It was my husband who gave me the courage to learn English before coming to the United States. It was his will power that drew me over the Pacific Ocean in spite of the many obstacles. It was my husband who, as soon as he got his first job, said to me, "You worked hard, darling, while I was studying. Now it is your turn to go back to school if you wish."

After we were married, Won Young wanted me to return to Japan with him so he could continue his studies, but both of our families had discouraged this. Bombing over Japan was increasingly heavy. Therefore, my husband remained in Seoul working at the Severance Medical School Hospital. In order for me to finish the six months' required teaching at the Training School, I had to leave him after only one short week's stay at his home. Difficult as it was for my husband to let me go back, we remembered our letters.

"How can I stand beside you," I asked him, "if, because of not meeting the requirements, I do not even get my college degree?"

In this, our first and most difficult decision, the theme of our marriage was established.

Chapter 8

TEACHING WHAT I PRACTICED

FORTUNATELY, I managed to be sent to the An-Ak Training School when I finished the concentrated course at Ewha, and as a result I was able to live with my family in Kom-Pawi. It was clear that I should not be able to teach what I wanted to, but I was grateful, at least, to be instructing my childhood friends.

I started teaching in April, 1944. The Training School was under the supervision of the principal of my old grade school, and official instructions were sent to me through her. Classrooms and facilities were also borrowed from the grade school, An-Shin, one of the few remaining private schools in our province.

At that time, in Korea, a school was called "private" when it was operated entirely by Koreans. A public school was one controlled by the Japanese government with a Japanese principal and several Japanese teachers. There used to be quite a few private grade schools in Whang-Hae province, but during the Second World War Japanese pressure became unbearable and many were converted from private to public operations. Because the private schools had been

forced to devote more hours to the war effort, the Koreans thought that this change would benefit the pupils. It was the only way to keep Japanese school inspectors quiet, but it was torture for the boys and girls.

When I was a student, An-Shin was known for its devotion to our townspeople. It had been in existence over forty years. Some of the faculty members had been alumnae of the school who had come back to teach after receiving higher education out of town. Many of them had been there over ten years. Even the physical structure of the school was a result of service, love and devotion. In the beginning, before there was a classroom and an auditorium, the pupils had to study in their teachers' homes. Later, the building rose from field stones gathered by the pupils, and was the pride of all the townspeople. The standard of education had been kept high above that of any public school, and it was one of the best-equipped buildings in the province. It was the first to have a moving picture camera and projector. It had an electric siren to mark the beginnings and ends of class hours, and a loud-speaker to play music which echoed throughout the town. The alumnae congregated at the school to play the piano, sing, and play tennis in the school courts. Laughter could be heard from every corner of the campus.

What a change I found when I returned to teach in the Training School! The Japanese had been wise enough not to convert An-Shin into a public school and replace the staff with Japanese. They knew that the resentment of the people would be too great. However, all of the teachers who had been there for over ten years had been replaced by Japanese or young Japanese educated Koreans. Even the devoted principal had been replaced.

Though the new principal was not Japanese, he was known for his loyalty to that country. He was the first Korean to become a school inspector in our province, and, curiously,

he even looked a little like a Japanese. When he introduced me to the children, I could hear subdued chuckles from them because I was a head taller than he.

No longer was the school filled with laughter and joy. The pupils appeared to have forgotten how to laugh. The affection and devotion of the townspeople toward the school had gone when their beloved teachers were replaced. Nevertheless, I soon began to understand the new principal's difficult position and could not help sympathizing with him. He was a constant target for both parties. The Japanese kept their eyes on him because he was Korean, and, at the same time, the townspeople looked upon him with resentful eyes.

That summer, 1944, I saw teachers doing the impossible, and young pupils bearing the unbearable. During their summer vacation children, including the second graders, were put to hard labor. Every morning at six they were assembled in front of the Shinto shrine to pray for the victory of Japan. At eight o'clock, after a hasty breakfast, they returned to school with their small lunch bags. They worked all day under the burning sun, climbed mountains, chopped down pine trees and dug out the roots. Those trunks and roots were to be used to make fuel which was becoming desperately short in Japan.

The children gathered poplar seeds which had silky cottonlike filaments. These tiny strands were supposed to supplement much-needed cotton. Even though all the cotton raised in Korea was taken away by the Japanese, it was far from being enough, for it was used to make explosives. Older children would climb the tall poplar trees to cut down branches, while the younger ones stripped off the seeds. Many youngsters were hurt. Some fell; others were hit by falling branches.

This frenzied seeking for substitutes made me think that the war must be near an end. How many miles could a plane fly on pine oil? How many guns could be fired with the fila-

ments of poplar seeds? This was not all. Metal was being confiscated. Brass cooking utensils, spoons, rings, even hair-pins, had to be donated to the war effort. Metal edges of stairs and buildings were ripped out. Railings on bridges and cashier's windows were replaced by wooden bars. Those who had metal fillings in their teeth joked with one another about not laughing with their mouths open, lest the Japanese rip out the fillings to make warships!

Across the street from the An-Shin grade school was a boys' high school which had been started four years before I returned. A few years earlier there had been a large campaign to build a high school in An-Ak. This would mean that the middle class farmers' children could get an education.

A wealthy man had contributed three hundred thousand won toward the building fund. At that time, though the won was equivalent to a half dollar in the exchange rate, it had the purchasing power of a dollar in our locality. To start a private school by Koreans, for Koreans, permission had to be granted by the Japanese government. The regulations were very strict, as the Japanese wanted to discourage such activity as much as possible. First, money raised for the founding of a school had to be approved by the government as being enough to make the school self-sufficient. The three hundred thousand won was, of course, not enough, but the townspeople were told that five hundred thousand won would be. After a fund-raising campaign had been conducted for a year, the required amount was collected.

The Japanese officials again raised the amount—this time to seven hundred thousand won.

The campaign went on for another two years. It was not unusual to see a long line of farmers in front of the fund-raising headquarters, bringing bags of rice, a chicken, a pig, even a cow. A cow to a Korean farmer was more than just a cow. It plowed for him, helped him harvest, and carried his crops to the fair. No one owned more than one, and he

had to be a middle class farmer even to own that. Yet everyone agreed that the sacrifice was worthwhile.

The fund was eventually raised because Koreans were determined to give a higher education to their children, but a boys' *public* high school had to be built—a coeducational school for Japanese and Koreans. And since the Japanese population was growing fast, even in that small town, there was not much room for the Korean children!

In the school where I taught there were sixty-two enrollments though the daily attendance was less than half this number. My students were young women over seventeen who had less than two years of grade school education. The purpose of their course was to train them to become better wives of the young Korean men who had been given the privilege of enlisting in the Loyal Japanese Imperial Army. They were to be taught the proper attitudes of mothers who would some day have the honor of dedicating their sons' lives to the Emperor. Their primary training was reading and writing simple Japanese, and how to add and subtract simple numbers.

Drafting Korean boys into the Japanese army and into factories and governmental projects had just started. This had created new problems in dealing with Korean women. Even in the small villages the majority of young men could read and write and understand Japanese. Their uneducated wives, however, did not know the language at all, and when their young husbands were drafted into the army or the Labor Service Unit, leaving the women alone at home, the Japanese had difficulty in making themselves understood. The women were not clear about what proportions of the crops were to be donated to the government, or where they should be brought. And frightened young wives often created scenes when their husbands had to leave them.

Quite confused about many matters myself, I did not feel too well qualified to train those young women. But I

was happy to have a chance to spend time with people who were more in need of help and guidance than anyone else I had ever known. I tried my best to make their opportunity a happy one, and to create pleasant moments for my pupils. I wanted them to have warm memories when they again took up the dreary lives they were destined to lead. Though it was compulsory for these women to attend the Training School for a year, they actually welcomed the opportunity to leave their huts and hard work in the fields. They were overjoyed at the thought of going to school and learning. Notwithstanding many interruptions in their regular attendance, they came as often as they could manage, in spite of the fact that most of them had to walk ten or more miles to get to school.

In the beginning, the Japanese inspectors came around often to check on us. The first month, we memorized a series of questions and answers designed to satisfy their ever-alerted ears:

QUESTION: Why are we here?

ANSWER: To train our minds and bodies so that we will become better wives and mothers.

QUESTION: Why do we have to become better wives and mothers?

ANSWER: Because our husbands and sons are given the honor of enlisting in the Great Japanese Army.

QUESTION: Why should we be willing to obey the Japanese officials?

ANSWER: Because they are the ones protecting our lives.

QUESTION: Why do we have to produce more crops?

ANSWER: Crops are needed for feeding the Great Army.

My pupils had good sense, though they were ignorant of reading and writing. They well understood why it was necessary to respond that way, and they were most co-operative.

In two or three weeks they had memorized the answers very well, and we could carry on our conversation beautifully in Japanese. After hearing our questions and answers a few times the inspectors visited us less frequently, and the principal told me one day, "I take off my hat to you. It was a beautiful performance." From then on, we understood each other well; he often pretended not to see what I was doing.

Some afternoons we learned to cook interesting dishes out of the vegetables we had raised, learned to sew dresses and to sing folk songs. I did not play the organ well at all, for my left hand never kept the same tempo as my right, yet I managed to produce simple melodies with my right fingers only. The girls did not care how badly I played; they learned fast and were delighted. We often had picnics where we learned to play games. My students began to laugh aloud when they were happy which was most unusual, for young married women living with their parents-in-law seldom showed any emotion. Controlling their expressions in front of their elders was one of the many conventions young Korean women had to observe. They were eager to learn, appreciative of kindness, and very sincere. Though aware of their ignorance and poverty, they never showed anxiety or self-pity, but accepted what came with calm self-reliance.

My married pupils were not supposed to bring their babies into the classroom, but one woman often came with her infant tied to her back. One of my most studious pupils, she did not miss a single lesson. She begged me to let her stay in class with the baby, pleading that if it cried she would leave the room. She was, however, so eager not to miss a word that when the baby fussed, she simply nursed him as she continued her studying. She joined in all of our activities and even played games with the infant strapped on her back. This did not seem to bother either of them. When the other girls offered to tend the child for her, she

always refused, saying that class time was their only opportunity to be away from their own families.

This woman eventually told me her story. She had been an orphan since she was nine, when her mother died. A young peddler had found her weeping over the body, and, after helping with the burial, he took her away with him. She washed his clothes, ironed, mended and cooked hot meals for him. He, too, was an orphan. They married when she was fifteen and now had four children and were very happy. Her only sorrow was that she could not read or write, and now that her eldest child was going to school, her motherly pride was hurt. So much had she missed her own mother that she was determined to make her children proud of her in every way.

When I asked my pupils what they most wanted to learn, they answered, with giggles and blushes, "We want you to teach us how to conduct ourselves when we meet our prospective fiancés."

Ancient marriage customs in Korea never allowed the bride and groom to see each other until after the wedding ceremony. Sometimes the groom-to-be arranged to see the prospective bride without her knowledge, but she was never permitted to see him, and during the wedding ceremony her eyes were covered. Since this custom was gradually changing, even in remote sections of the country, it was now common for the boy and girl to meet as a final step before the engagement was announced. Won Young's week-long visit to us was unheard of in the country. In most cases, after all arrangements for the marriage had been completed and both families had agreed, the boy was formally presented to the girl's family, and later in the day the boy and girl were introduced and left alone for a little while. Since they were total strangers, this meeting was difficult and often embarrassing. Neither knew how to start a conversa-

tion and they often sat speechless, glued to their seats, eyes fixed on their own toes, afraid to raise their heads for fear that their eyes should meet. To make matters worse, mischievous brothers and sisters giggled as they peeked through finger holes made in the papered doors. And if the young couple tried to escape these torments by taking a walk in the village, the townspeople would stare at them with teasing eyes.

Since this arranged meeting was the final step before reaching an agreement to accept one another, the engagement was assured unless something unexpected occurred during the interview. It was a terrible humiliation to be rejected.

Marriages arranged in such a way were surprisingly successful. Many young people fell in love quickly after their wedding. They were both young and had similar backgrounds. Even if love did not come, the strong obligation oriental people feel toward marriage, home and family kept them together, whether or not the marriage was a happy one. Because obedience to parental decisions was regarded as a duty, this only added to the obligation to maintain marriage—it had, after all, been arranged by the parents—and breaking a marriage was therefore considered a disgrace to ancestors, parents and honored family names.

When a baby was born to the young couple, the marriage became really secure, especially if the infant was a boy. To a father, his son was the most important thing in the world because he would carry on the family name. He would some day inherit his home and land, learn to worship his ancestors and take care of their tombs. When his father was old and unable to work, the boy would be expected to look after him.

With the coming of a son, the husband gained a new attitude toward his wife. His respect for her increased, and he took better care of her. His son could not be happy without

his mother; therefore her well-being was the most important thing for the baby and himself. On the other hand, the wife found new happiness as a mother. With a baby to love and raise, her life acquired new purpose and meaning. The innocent love of her child now filled her heart. Since it was her husband who had brought such happiness, her regard for him increased. What matter that she must work hard in the home or in the field, since the harder she worked, the larger would be her son's inheritance.

Though marriages arranged in this way may not seem as exciting or romantic as the love between newlyweds in the Western world, they engendered a subtle and enduring kind of love which became very deep, its roots secured in the soil. And if the birth of a baby boy still did not succeed in creating love between the parents, it at least brought about a partnership between two people who worked hard together, side by side, toward the same purpose.

When I told the young women in the Training School to ask me what they wished most to know, the first question was whether there was any scientific way of having a baby boy instead of a girl. The second: What would happen to them when the war was over? To the first question, I had no satisfactory answer, but to the latter, I did my best to give them a brighter outlook.

"The war will end some day soon," I explained. "Of course, we expect changes all around us. We do not know what they will be. But this much we do know. This country of ours has been an unfortunate nation, always oppressed by stronger powers, and you girls are among the poorest of the unfortunate Koreans. Regardless of what changes take place, for you things must surely become better. Let us all have faith and hope that happier days are soon to come!"

I left these girls just as we were beginning to know one another and just as they had begun to feel at ease about

bringing me their personal problems. Later, I often thought of them. Even now, some nights while lying in bed I remember their faces, one by one, wondering what has become of them. I say to myself, "They must be thinking what a terrible liar I was."

Chapter 9

REFUGEES FROM THE NORTH

THE birth of our first child was preceded by events that were destined to change the entire course of our lives. As it was the custom for a couple to live with the husband's family if he were the only or the eldest son, I had returned to Seoul in the fall of 1944, soon after I had finished the required period of teaching at the Training School. Then in August of the following year, at noon of the fifteenth, the Japanese Emperor announced over the radio the unconditional surrender of Japan.

Thus ended World War II. I remember the excitement, uncertainty and confusion caused by this announcement. Our own family plans were immediately affected. For several days, we had been discussing the possibility of my going north to be with my mother when our first baby arrived. It was customary for the first child to be delivered at the bride's home, under her mother's care. My brother Tai-Am had actually come to Seoul for the express purpose of escorting me home, but Won Young was reluctant to have me go. The trip would have been difficult in any case; the

medical care I would receive in An-Ak would not be as good as in Seoul; "and now, since everything is so uncertain," Won Young reasoned, "the best thing is to stay where you are. Then we will be together, whatever happens."

Anxious to be with his own family during this period of excitement, Tai-Am returned home alone. If he had delayed leaving by only a few days, he would never have made it, and if I had left with him I would have been separated from my husband indefinitely. Before the month of August ended, Russian troops had occupied the entire area north of the thirty-eighth parallel; the northbound train my brother had taken could no longer cross this line!

When we learned of this, Won Young and I thanked God for keeping us together. Though I was separated from my family in the north, I believed—as all Koreans believed at the time—that the division of north and south was temporary.

In October our baby—a son—was born to us. It was indeed a happy day for the Kohs. In the Koh family line, baby boys had been rare; Won Young's father had been the fourth generation of only sons, while Won Young himself was an only son—the last child to be born.

Naming this first-born boy of ours was a very important family matter. After considerable thought, my father-in-law chose Kwang, meaning "light," as the beginning word of the baby's first name. Now it was Won Young's responsibility to find an ending word to complete the name. Since officially only ten days were allowed for reporting and registering babies' names at the city hall, the search soon became a desperate one. Every dictionary available in the house was piled on Won Young's desk. He pored over every page looking for a suitable ending word. "It must mean well, sound well and look well when it is written," he insisted. Then he continued searching, mumbling, "It must be easy to write, too, so that it won't be too hard for him to learn.

And because our baby is going to be someone special, it mustn't be too common."

Nine days passed and still the baby did not have a name. In the late evening of the tenth day Won Young came from his study, exhausted but well pleased. He had chosen In, meaning "east," as the ending word. So we named our son Kwang-In, or "light in the east."

By this time, excitement over the surrender of Japan and the welcoming of the liberators—American and Russian troops—had quieted down and astonishing rumors of what was happening north of the thirty-eighth parallel were beginning to be heard in the south. At first, I refused to believe them, but as the stories became more frequent and realistic, I began to worry about my family and I longed to show my baby to my mother. Little did I know then that I was not to see her until two more children had been born to us—next a girl, In-Sung (Graceful Star) and finally another boy Kwang-Eal (light of the sun).

It was dawn on a frosty late autumn day when I heard knocking on our front gate, and our little dog Narry barked loudly to let us know that someone strange was at the door. When I opened the gate I saw my father, disguised in filthy farmer's clothes, his face weary and unshaven! Except for a few short rides with truck drivers, he had walked for seven days, taking shelter under bridges at night. My father, the first refugee from North Korea I received, confirmed the rumors we had been hearing, tales later to be told and retold by weary wanderers streaming southward.

The thirty-eighth parallel, set up as a temporary measure to disarm the Japanese, had become a political frontier. Instead of having a single, unified government, the country was split in half. This was not yet clearly understood in the south, for people in North Korea had welcomed the

Russians with the same enthusiasm and excitement that South Koreans had received the American troops in Seoul.

But the Russians in the north had announced to the excited populace, "We are here not only to liberate you people from the oppression of imperialist Japan, but also to free you from slavery under the haughty and arrogant landlords. We are here as your helping brothers. We are all truly equal. Let us work together side by side to build a free and ideal world."

Since the majority of Koreans were farmers, and almost eighty per cent of these were tenant farmers, the applause was loud indeed. While crowds of excited people followed them, the Russians marched into the homes of the wealthy. They drove great spikes into the beautiful front room floors, then tethered their horses to these unsightly nails. Sometimes they built fires with the furniture, or shouted, "You people come in and help yourselves. Everything in this house belongs to you good, hard-working peasants. Look at these fine things! Were they not bought by the bloodsucker landlords with money you people earned by toil and sweat? This land which you have been farming—it will also be yours. No longer will you have to give half your crops to these landlords."

Almost in tears, the people praised the Russians, raising their hands high and shouting joyously. Into the houses rushed the crowds. They removed every piece of furnishing, even the doors; window frames were ripped apart and carried away. The landlords, of course, fled south.

In our An-Ak, there were many orchards, as the climate was known to be good for a rich harvest of apples. When the Russian troops came it was early fall, the end of August, and though the apples would be ripe in a month or two, they were now still green. Nevertheless, Russian soldiers drove into the orchards on trucks, tore down the green apples with leaves and branches all together. Then they

drove around the countryside, throwing apples to the crowds and shouting, "Free gifts to the poor." In the farm villages, throngs of children followed the trucks with great excitement and satisfaction.

Of course, the traditional farming system in Korea had long needed to be improved. Returning half of their crops to the landowners was too heavy a tax on the tenant farmers, who never had a chance to save enough money for a piece of land. The necessity for revision of the land ownership system was also strongly felt in American-occupied South Korea, where a redistribution program was carried out under orderly supervision soon after the liberation from Japan.

However, the feeling between tenant farmers and landlords had not necessarily been hostile. Often beautiful human relationships had existed. When a bad crop was inevitable, or when there had been a serious illness in the tenant farmer's family, it was not unusual for a landlord to reduce the amount of taxation. It was common practice for a landlord to give a piece of his land to a good tenant farmer, and to build a home for the man and his family. Landowners looked after their tenants through many difficult times; conversely, the tenant farmers often turned to their landlords for help. Many poor families respected and almost worshiped their landlords, who were rarely lazy social parasites. In Korea, where purchasing land had always been considered the best way of saving, many people had become landlords only after years of hard work and thrift.

The second group to be "cleaned up" were those who were thought to be pro-Japanese—those who had held government positions under the Japanese rule. So-called people's courts were organized in each town to try them and pass judgment. Fair trials could hardly be expected. The juries were groups of excited, ignorant people, aroused by a wild desire to avenge their many years of poverty. Their action was subtly directed by a strong power that had vast

experience in exploiting weak spots in human nature. There were, of course, some Korean officials who had mishandled their rank, but most of them had done precisely what they were told to do by the Japanese, and had had no choice of action. This was promptly forgotten, and many unfair judgments were passed. When they could escape, these ex-officials fled south where they could, at least, be sure of a fair trial.

While the landlords and former government workers fled, the majority of North Koreans were experiencing the first satisfaction of revenge, and rejoicing in the freedom they thought they had gained. Revenge! What else could have been more appealing to people who had lived for thirty-five years under severe political oppression and inescapable poverty! They believed that this was indeed a new world, a free world, and the kind of world we had yearned for, with equal chances for all. There were some people in the south who rather envied the North Koreans; their own lot seemed dull and uneventful by comparison!

The next group to flee southward were people like my father, who neither belonged to the wealthy landlord class (though most of his relatives did) nor to the pro-Japanese element, but who believed in God and had a good educational background. This group felt sure that the undesirable changes must be a temporary aftereffect of the war. It was understandable that war-weary Russian soldiers might be rash, and that severely oppressed Koreans needed an emotional outlet. Hopefully, they said to each other, "This will all soon come to an end. Then the United States and Russia will get together and help us build a unified, independent nation."

Meanwhile, the Communists sowed their seeds of hate.

While the excited people were still wandering about, Communist-controlled government officials were rapidly installed in every town. They demanded unquestioning loyalty

from the people. "Was this too much to ask for what the people had received?" they said.

"We gave you freedom—liberated you from Japanese oppression, freed you from landlords' slavery, helped you take revenge on the pro-Japanese who made you suffer. Now we demand your full co-operation in building a new free world."

Changes took place rapidly. Pictures of Stalin were hung where the Japanese Emperor's had been. The pledge of loyalty to the People's Government was given at all gatherings, replacing the pledge of loyalty to Japan. Songs praising brotherhood were taught in schools even more intensely than the Japanese had taught us their patriotic songs. Guards on the thirty-eighth parallel grew more numerous, and people began to feel increasingly uneasy. Religious leaders and those with good educations, who sought real freedom—freedom to live according to their own principles—found the air heavier to breathe every day. They could no longer follow a "wait and see" policy, but had either to co-operate fully with the Communist government, or disappear. If they accepted appointments as government officials and refused to do whatever they believed was contrary to their people's interests, they were branded as traitors. This was my father's situation. He was appointed a town "official," and had either to accept, or leave.

Later, many of the farmers became disillusioned. After the first wild excitement, they plowed the land which they thought had been given to them free of charge, but when the first harvest season arrived they found themselves faced with a much heavier taxation to the People's Government than they had ever paid to their landlords. They had no one to whom they might turn for clemency when the crops were bad or there was illness in the family. Now they gazed wistfully toward the landlords' houses, which they had plundered so eagerly and which were occupied by severe,

stern-looking Communist officials and their families—total strangers to the villagers. Helpless and left out, remorse overwhelmed them. Gradually, many farmers made their way across the ever-tightening border to seek the advice and help of their former landlords who, in retrospect, had indeed been their friends. I remember one of my father's faithful tenant farmers, who, though seriously ill, had dragged himself to Seoul to see my father's face once more before he died.

Under the new regime laborers, too, found themselves displaced. Formerly, they had earned their living by carrying loads on their backs for the well-to-do, cleaning, papering and chopping firewood from house to house. Since all of the wealthy people had fled south, there were none left to hire them. So the laborer likewise started on his southern trip.

And, as years went on, the inevitable happened. The name "traitor" came to be applied to anyone the officials wanted to be rid of. The number of persons punished as traitors gradually increased, until men who had judged and tried their fellows began to feel uneasy. One could never know if the day might come when he himself would be branded. Confused and frightened, they, too, fled southward.

So it was, that day after day, month after month and year after year, the never-ending line of people with small bundles on their backs crossed the thirty-eighth parallel, leaving most of their belongings behind them and risking their lives to escape.

Seoul, the capital of South Korea, once the capital of all Korea, had never been so overpopulated. Nearly all of the people fleeing from the north went there—all except a few who had friends or relatives in some other town in the south. After crossing the border, many of them cried with relief as they sat on the winding road to rest their weary feet. Happiness, though, was short-lived. Uncertainty gradually

dawned; they had no destination! They could not sit by the road forever! Then, gathering their strength, they trudged toward Seoul, the only city in the south with a familiar name.

Streets in the capital were jammed with people looking for shelter and a means of earning a living. Streetcars and buses were so overloaded that the windows and doors popped open while the vehicles were in motion. What had been considered a one-family house was now occupied by three or four families. An eight- by seven-foot room now accommodated a family of five, six, or more. The native residents of Seoul shared their homes, food and clothes with relatives from the north.

Close family feeling was very strong in Korea, even toward distant relatives. The custom of ancestor worship and the stabilizing influence of living in one locality cultivated powerful ties among relatives. For instance, my father's relatives with the same family name, Kim, had lived in An-Ak, for many generations. We were all the descendants of the same ancestor who was four generations removed from my father. The family rule book, which was observed by all of us, was kept by the oldest living Kim. Our ancestral father had written in it his principles for maintaining good family relationships. "For a family to be prosperous, all brothers must co-operate and help one another with good will," the book read. Our names were chosen according to the directions in that book. Most of our relatives had remained in An-Ak, and, even when the young people went away to receive higher education, they had usually returned after graduation to settle on the portions of land that awaited them.

This attitude toward family and ancestors was much the same among other Korean families, and created a sense of devoted obligation. Therefore, when refugees from the north poured down into Seoul, it created appalling situations for the residents. They accepted as many relatives as

they could possibly accommodate. Those who had come early had the advantage, and many of them later maintained hotels for relatives and friends who followed.

When my father arrived on that frosty autumn morning in 1945 he was alone. Many families straggled southward in this manner, each member separately—first the father, then the older children, and, last, the mother with the younger ones. Often grandparents remained behind after everyone else had fled, in order to watch over the homes and lands as long as possible, hoping for the day when Korea would be united. It took three years for my entire family to complete its southward journey.

My older brothers followed, one by one, but my mother remained in the north three years longer, hoping to hold on to our home and possessions.

During these three years my father found himself free of responsibility. He could do nothing for his family in the north. Always optimistic, he accepted this period as a welcome chance to devote himself to helping fellow-refugees. His small room at his brother's home was always packed with newcomers from the north. He had many relatives, friends and young people who respected him. He welcomed them all, encouraged them, gave them food, and permitted them to stay in his room until they were located elsewhere. I often saw him going out to the street to buy food, after greeting weary new arrivals. Sometimes, he came back with a bagful of hot sweet potatoes, his face content. When he had only this to offer, I knew my father had spent his last penny. Once, I asked him how he could do these things when the house he lived in was not his own, and when he had no idea where his next meal was coming from.

He answered, with his usual peaceful expression, "Regardless of whose house this is, I can neither let my friends go out in the cold when I have a warm room, nor can

I let them face the new world with an empty stomach as long as I have something to eat myself." He added, then, "Curiously enough, when the last penny is gone, I somehow manage to get more."

Of all the people I knew, my father was the one person leading a self-satisfying and rewarding life. He had peace of mind at all times. I admired his faith and optimism but could no longer say that I would like to follow in his footsteps, as I used to when I was a little girl. I began to question his judgment. Which should come first, his obligation toward his own family, or toward his fellow man? If he had been capable of serving both well, there would have been no problem, but since this was impossible, should not his own family have been considered first?

When we were living in our home back in Kom-Pawi, my father's good will and generosity toward the poor farmers had been an inspiration to them. The villagers' lives were happier and no one suffered, for we still had enough to live on comfortably. Now it was different! His indiscriminate generosity brought a burden to his brother's family, who had kindly given him room and board. Three years later, when my mother finally arrived with my younger brothers and sisters, my father had neither saved a penny nor bought a pan to prepare for their arrival. The few things I had given him to save for my mother had been presented to other refugee families or exchanged for baked sweet potatoes to feed the hungry arrivals.

By the time my mother arrived in Seoul I was no longer a little girl, but the mother of three babies of my own. I wondered how she must have felt. For three long years she had remained beyond the thirty-eighth parallel, alone with her five youngest children in order to watch over the house and property, hoping to preserve something for her children's future. Yet I could not really decide what my father should have done. To the refugees who had come

to him, he was the only person they knew or had heard of in the south; his kindness was their only hope, his room their only destination.

My father's concern for refugees did not stop with the North Koreans. One Sunday afternoon in January, 1946, when I stopped by to visit him, he asked if I was interested in going with him to see the Japanese repatriates from the north. My father had learned that a number of Japanese from An-Ak had just arrived in Seoul and were temporarily stationed in one of the Shinto shrines. He had also heard that some of them were ill.

"After all," he said, "they, too, are unfortunate refugees. They have come a long way from their homes to live. It must have been harder for them to find a place among us than it was for us to receive them. They came to our country because they could not earn a living in their own, and now they return to Japan empty-handed. If it was difficult for them to get work in Japan before, it will be ten times harder now." Then my father looked thoughtful, and continued, "I would like to go to them and offer my help. Some of them taught my children, and some were kind to me when I was in prison."

We walked up to the Shinto shrine near Yong-San. It had been newly constructed toward the end of the war and the front yard was not quite completed. After my father spoke to the guard, we were allowed to pass. There, I saw again the sorrow of a defeated nation! The Japanese huddled inside the front shrine, bundled in soiled blankets and quilts, their few shabby belongings scattered here and there. The conqueror's arrogant pride, their well-known hot tempers and shrewd eyes had vanished. They were transformed into listless, suffering human beings. No longer were they the resented oppressors to me, but helpless people in need

of help, their strength exhausted and their bodies weary from being pushed around.

When I saw a young girl who had taught at the grade school while I was at the Training School, her hair now straggling, her eyes sunk deep in her cheeks, I felt a strong impulse to cling to her and weep. We held out our hands and gazed at one another. Unexplainable warmth overwhelmed us. Our eyes were moist! We stood for awhile without a word, and during this silence, many thoughts were exchanged—we apologized and asked forgiveness for our previous harsh feelings toward each other, between her country and mine. We became young and understanding friends, and from that moment on, whatever bitterness I had against the Japanese was gone. After all, this girl loved her country as much as I loved mine. The only difference between us was that we belonged to different teams. In a democratic team, the members had the right to correct their leaders if they were going in the wrong direction, but the team to which she belonged was not that kind. And now, those arrogant oppressors were beaten. We Koreans had been without a nation, had tried to build our homes under an alien rule. Never secure, I knew the sadness of a driven people and I looked upon the weary Japanese with understanding and sympathy. I hoped sincerely that the forces occupying their country would be kinder to them than they had been to us!

My father and I wished them a safe trip and hoped that they should do well in their homeland. We wrote down a list of items they asked us to get for them and promised to return soon. Then we walked slowly down the stone steps, deep in our own thoughts.

The years passed without bringing reunification to our land. Anxiety, discouragement and economic hardship grew

more and more intense among the homeless. Since the majority of refugees had been farmers, there was no work for them. During the years from 1945 to 1950, there were not many industries operating in Korea. Most of them had been owned by the Japanese, and it took some time for production to start after they left. There were not enough skilled Korean workers. Worst of all, there was very little electricity south of the thirty-eighth parallel. The main generating plants were in the north where large rivers ran through high mountains. Enough electricity had been one of the few commodities Korea could boast about, but the Communists would not generate it beyond the thirty-eighth parallel. Motors stood still in the factories, homes were without lights. Though there were a few small generating plants in South Korea, and though the United States was trying to set up new ones, these were not enough. Houses were lighted by candles or kerosene lamps, and there were frequent fires which produced more homeless people.

During this confused period the only business that seemed to be growing rapidly was the buying and selling of used clothing and household goods. Desperate housewives wrapped their extra skirts, extra blouses, outgrown children's clothes and extra blankets in small bundles and went to the central market place to sell them. At the entrance to the market, long lines of men, women, boys and girls waited for the housewives with their pitiful bundles. A bundle was grabbed as soon as it was spotted, and cries went up, "Is it for sale? Is it for sale?"

It was counted a successful day if a person made enough money to get a handful of rice. Whenever I went to the market place, after seeing familiar faces in the lines, I came home feeling depressed and sick. Sometimes I saw my relatives from the north, sometimes I met classmates from Pae-Wha. Sometimes I even saw a college classmate standing

on the frozen sidewalk with her baby tied to her back, trying bashfully to bid for those desperately needed bundles.

The underground pass at the south gate was full of high-school girls selling newspapers. I could scarcely bear to see their red, chapped hands, feel them pulling at my skirts, in all directions, begging me to buy their newspapers. Often I spotted uniforms from my own high school. Many students had been stranded in Seoul while their parents remained in the north. They had no way of communicating with their families, and monthly expense money had long ago ceased to arrive. Courageously, they struggled to continue their education on their own by selling newspapers and doing any kind of odd jobs they could find after school hours. I imagined them crying at night in their cold dormitory rooms and calling for their mothers, even though they bravely met their daily problems as best they could. When I was their age, I had cried many nights, longing for my parents, in spite of all the comforts I had—despite the facts that my mother wrote me every week, my father sent me monthly expenses. And how must their worried parents feel, having no way of knowing what had become of their daughters?

Although many people fled to South Korea seeking freedom, there were some who remained in the north with their lands. Many, having lost the faith or the strength to look for a better life, had given up searching for freedom or happier days. Too badly beaten, many accepted whatever they found without a challenge, merely doing whatever they were told to do without resisting. During the Korean War, I could never consider North Korean soldiers as my enemies. They had no choice. They had to eat to live. To eat, they had to remain with the land, their only source of food. They were drafted eventually, given guns, and

forced to march against their own people.

There were some who returned to the north after failing to earn a living below the thirty-eighth parallel. Freedom or no freedom, they, too, had to eat. I saw one of my aunts return to North Korea with her three small children. She had lost her husband since they had come to Seoul. He had overtaxed his strength and died of tuberculosis. She told me when she started on her long, sad journey back, "I am a helpless woman and my children are little. No harm will come to us. I hid away twelve bags of rice which will feed my little ones during the coming winter." Only hopelessness could have permitted her to believe that home and rice would be there when she returned.

By 1950, however, we all thought that the thirty-eighth parallel would soon be erased and that we would soon be able to return home. I remember a family party at that time. We had not forgotten tradition — everyone brought a different kind of cake. It was a cheerful gathering and everyone seemed to be in good spirits, but the songs we sang were tinged with nostalgia for home. None of us suspected that the Korean War was about to start. The worst disaster was yet to come.

One of my uncles made a speech. "You young people of my beloved Kim family!" he said. "My spirits are lifted high today at seeing your shining, hopeful faces. At times I have been discouraged, thinking that we Kims had been trampled to the ground. All of us have lost our homes and land, all of us have been visited by hard times. But, as long as you young Kims keep up good spirits and faith, I believe a brighter future will be ours. Family relationship is like a set of teeth. If only one or two teeth are weak, bridgework can be easily made that gets its support from the stronger teeth. When, however, all the teeth are weak, there is no hope. For awhile I wondered whether all of us were not loose teeth—none of us had roots in the south.

But now I see that some are gaining strength again, and soon there will be enough strong teeth to lend strength to the weaker ones, so that bridges can be made. Then we will all be strong once more. You young people, help one another and lend strength to one another."

I have often repeated this speech to myself. Surely, I am a strong tooth that has been spared for my relatives and friends. What have I done to lend my strength to them?

Chapter 10

THE ONE I MISS MOST

ONE foggy morning in September, 1948, Won Young left for the United States from In-Chun harbor. To further his medical studies, he was going to the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. He had been a resident in surgery since his graduation, preparing to take over his father's practice, but his ambition had always been to do research work in the field of microbiology which would require another degree. At last his dream had come true.

My father-in-law had studied medicine in New York many years before, and two of Won Young's sisters had taken graduate courses in the States, but World War II had caused a postponement of Won Young's own studies. As soon as the war ended, he and his younger sister began to prepare for their departure. His sister had gone the year before to take graduate courses in public health at the University of Michigan. Now, Won Young was leaving.

My father-in-law, Dr. Myung Woo Koh, was one of the most devoted of fathers and educators. A self-made man, he had supported his parents since the age of seventeen.

He worked his way through medical school in Korea and later continued his training in the States. After his return to Korea, he taught at the Severance Union Medical School in Seoul for thirty years. He had given his four children, three daughters and a son, the best education obtainable: one had become a pianist; another, a doctor of philosophy; and two were doctors of medicine. My father-in-law's most cherished dream was to see that his only son completed his studies in the United States, and he went without comfort and luxury for himself to achieve it. During the cold Korean winters I often saw him shoveling his own coal for the stove in his office. To remind himself of this sacrifice, Won Young kept one of his father's navy blue suit jackets in his closet. The jacket was worn out; the front edge was so frayed that the white padding showed through. While Dr. Koh's children were at college, this had been his only suit jacket, and once when he was called upon to make a speech at a doctors' meeting, he stained the tell-tale white padding with dark blue ink.

That morning in September this remarkable man and I stood together on the dock watching the ship disappear into the fog. When we could see it no longer, we turned our eyes toward each other. I knew how he felt. Though this was a moment of fulfilled hope, it was also a painful separation. His only son was leaving him for four years—and Dr. Koh was nearing seventy!

Though equally devoted to all his children, his relationship with Won Young was special. The only son, born in his late years when he had almost given up hope, Won Young was the successor to his home, his name, and to his proud profession. How eagerly the father used to wait for Won Young's return from work at the hospital every afternoon! How proud he was, listening to Won Young tell of new medical techniques. How content the father looked as he and his son sipped coffee together after Won Young had

assisted him in a difficult operation! And now this son was going far away, across the Pacific Ocean, almost to the other side of the earth—and for four long years.

My father-in-law pressed my shoulder gently and said, "Now, my last task will be to send you to him." His voice was so hoarse it could hardly be heard, but he blamed the damp air.

Dr. Koh did not return home with the rest of us; he wanted to stop at the church. That was the last time he ever saw his son.

When I returned to my room, I watched my three babies, aged one month to two and a half years, and looked at the stack of English textbooks Won Young had left on the top of my dresser. He had told me again and again, "Follow me to the United States as soon as you finish nursing the baby."

I asked myself, How?

I could not bear the thought of leaving my three children for so long, and wondered if I could master English well enough to be able to study in the United States. Though I had learned some English at high school and college, it was the least emphasized subject during World War II. We were often taught Japanese instead, during the English class hours. A simple vocabulary and grammar I had once learned, but had forgotten it. Won Young had left me ten English high-school textbooks, saying that if I studied them ten times each, I would be able to read *The New York Times*. If I could read *The New York Times*, I would have no difficulty in following lectures at an American college. I turned the pages of textbook number one. Even in this elementary reader, there were words I did not know. I mumbled to myself, "Ten times, these ten books, and with three babies! It may take ten years!"

From that day on, my father-in-law turned all his devotion and interest to preparing for my departure. He wanted his own dreams to come true through his son and me. He

wanted us both to have the wonderful experience of studying together in the best country in the world, for he had not been able to afford to bring his wife to the States when he himself was studying. Dr. Koh remembered how much he had missed her and he could not bear to think of his son so lonely and far away from home. He often smiled and said to me, "The best gift I can bestow on Won Young now is to wrap you up and send you to him."

My mother-in-law had also regretted that she had not been able to study in the United States. She had quite a difficult adjustment to make when her husband returned. Since her daughters had also been educated abroad, she had found it necessary to entertain many American friends and had been handicapped by not knowing English and American ways of living. She did not want the situation repeated again with me.

Indeed, both of my in-laws strongly encouraged me to follow Won Young as soon as I had mastered the language. They argued that at such an early age my children would not know the difference between care received from their parents or from their grandparents, as long as they did receive love. Though I knew this to be true and was grateful for their thoughtful selflessness, leaving my three babies was the hardest decision I had to make.

Many nights I lay awake undecided, and walked to the cribs to watch the peaceful, sleeping faces. I shook my head and said to myself, "I just can't do it."

Then I returned to my bed again and stared at the ceiling, trying to figure out what would be best for our future. I compared the adjustment I would have to make when Won Young came home after four years with the adjustment my children would have to make when their parents came home total strangers. I considered carefully the effect of our family's future happiness as a whole, and finally reached the decision to divide the four years of family separation in half:

two years I would remain with the children, and for the latter two I would join Won Young, after which we could return home together.

In the light of this decision, I busily studied English. My parents-in-law took over all the household responsibilities, while our faithful maid, who had retired, came back to help me with the babies, promising to continue her services until my return from the States. After a year and a half of hard study, I was able to finish those ten English textbooks ten times each, repeating even oftener the most difficult ones. I cannot say that I was able to read and understand every article in *The New York Times* (even today I can't do that) but I could read magazines and get the general meaning out of them, and I could carry on conversations with my American friends without too much difficulty. My family was often served burned food; every pan in our kitchen was scorched because of my absorption in memorizing English words. My father-in-law, though, was delighted with my progress and praised every conversation I carried on with his American guests. He was constantly concerned over my health, for I had lost weight during those months of study. Often he bought my favorite snacks, sending them to my room by the bagfuls while I was studying. And if I was late coming home from the English classes I attended to practice conversation, I always found him waiting for me at the terminal, a cane in one hand and his hat in the other. He would welcome me with a great smile of relief as I pushed my way out of the overpacked streetcar, and my eyelids burned with overwhelming gratitude toward his selfless love. We would walk home together, talking about the day's happenings. When things went right for me, it made him pleased and proud.

On March 28, 1950, I flew from Kum-Po Airport, near Seoul, enroute to Japan where I would board a boat for the

United States. It had been twenty months since my husband's departure. During those months my three children had each grown a foot taller. Now their ages ranged from twenty-one months to four and a half years. The youngest, Kwang-Eal, could even speak all the simple words. His favorites were, "*Omma, kombu-kombu*," meaning, "Mommy, study—study."

During those twenty months I really worked—the hardest studying I had ever done. At school I had applied myself before tests, but this time I studied for keeps. I had also made a three-year supply of clothing for my children, all sewed by hand, since there was little ready-made clothing available at that time. Three chests of drawers were filled with different sizes of clothing and underwear, each labeled with name, year and season. Countless trips had to be made to our government's Foreign Office and to the United States Consulate for necessary papers. My father-in-law had sold part of his land to make my passage possible.

Finally on my way, I looked from the airplane windows. There they all stood, my parents-in-law, my parents, our faithful maid and my friends. Without their kind understanding and devoted help, the difficult preparations for this departure would not have been possible.

My father-in-law's last words were, "Make sure to have some fun, too. Opportunity like this doesn't come to many Korean couples."

My three little ones were still waving, their tiny hands held up high among the crowds, not knowing how far their mama was going, or how long she would be away! They used to wait like that when I was late coming home from a trip downtown, their noses pressed flat on the glass door of our living room. How they used to shout with joy and run toward me when they saw me enter the front gate, pushing and tumbling and trying to be the first one to receive my embrace! I felt the most poignant pain as I thought, This

evening and many other evenings, they will stand by the front door with their noses pressed flat, but there will be no joyful shouts, "Mama is home!"

That view I had through the airplane window was the last I ever had of my courageous father-in-law. Only three months later the Korean War broke out, and he was taken prisoner by the Red Army, as a pro-American, and his whereabouts are still not known. It is doubtful that he could have survived the ordeal of imprisonment at his age.

Since coming to this country, many sad and wonderful things have happened to us. On each happy occasion, I miss Dr. Koh most of all. How much I yearn to share our joy with him. I can still imagine the delighted and proud expression I would see on his kind face!

PART III

America



Chapter 11

ANXIOUS DAYS

ON April 12, 1950, I was to meet my husband at the North Philadelphia station of the Pennsylvania Railroad. As the train neared its destination, bringing me close to Won Young, a renewed excitement began to stir within me. Throughout the long and lonely journey across the Pacific Ocean, across the huge continent of North America, my senses had been almost numb—exhausted by the painful emotional experience of leaving the children and by the physical effort of so many painstaking preparations.

"I will meet Won Young in a few more hours." It felt like a dream. Again and again I looked at my watch. I wondered whether he would be greatly changed. If he had become Westernized, I tried to imagine how I would look to him now in comparison to the smart-featured, fair American ladies. I fussed with my appearance, anxious to look my best.

At last the train pulled into the station and I descended with my suitcases. The moment I spotted Won Young's face among so many tall, strange-looking people, I forgot everything—how I must look, how heavy the suitcases were

—and I began to run. Won Young was running toward me, too, calling to me to put down the heavy luggage. For a moment we were speechless. Then with both hands pressing my shoulders, he said, "How much smaller you look! It was hard, wasn't it?" Choked by tears, I nodded quietly.

From the station, we went to the YMCA Building in the center of the city, where Won Young had reserved a room for a few days. My husband was then living in the interns' quarters at the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia, and, as soon as he had helped me with my luggage, he had to return to finish his hospital duties until nine o'clock that night.

After he left me, I looked around the room and found a basket of apples and bananas on top of the bureau. Attached to it was a card with his signature and the words, Welcome Home.

My husband had not forgotten the nostalgic pleasure I felt toward apples, because this fruit had been so important in my childhood. And when I was carrying my children I had had a deep craving for bananas which we had not been able to buy in Korea.

I looked from the YMCA window. The buildings, lighted to the top, stood high against the darkness. Below, toylike trolley cars and automobiles speeded along a ribbon of asphalt between the tall buildings. I saw people rushing home to their loved ones, and I thought of my home, so far away. Somehow, this scene reminded me of the first night I spent in Seoul, when I was starting high school at the age of twelve. At that time the well-lighted buildings of Seoul had seemed just as high as these, the city noises as loud and my home as far away to me. The only difference, I thought, was that the tears I had shed in Seoul that night so long ago had sprung from longing for my father and mother, whereas now they were for my three children!

Soon after my arrival, I registered as a student nurse at

the Presbyterian Hospital where Won Young had a part-time residency while he attended the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. Though my primary purpose for crossing the Pacific had been to learn about the United States, we thought that nurse's training would add to my Home Economics career. Also, this plan would allow us to be close together, he in the interns' residence, and I in the nurses' dormitory.

He and I always started our day at five minutes to seven in front of the hospital, greeting one another with a cheery, "Good morning!" Won Young would be on his way to breakfast in the doctors' dining room in the hospital building, while I was going for mine at the nurses' main residence. At nine in the evening, after our duties were over, we ended the day by taking a walk to the corner drugstore for ice-cream cones. We decided to pretend we were not a married couple, but a doctor and a student nurse in love. That was the only fun we could afford. We had neither time nor money for anything else. Won Young helped me with my studies, especially with medical terms, and some evenings I went over to the laboratory to practice bandaging him. Once, when I had finished putting bandages all over his head, shoulder and hand, a technician came into the room. How concerned she looked! And how we all laughed when she found out that the "patient" suffered only from my need to practice!

I will never forget the evening of June 25, three months after my departure from Korea. Summer vacation had arrived, and Won Young was getting ready to leave for a children's summer camp as camp doctor, while I was to study hard in order to make up lessons I had missed by registering late.

One of the student nurses came into the library where I was deep in study and said, "Why, here you are! Dr. Koh has been looking all over for you."

I ran down the steps and met my husband on the way to the hospital. He grabbed me by both arms and said, "Don't worry! Everything is going to be all right."

"Worry about what?" I gasped, "Has something happened? What is it?"

Won Young told me the news he had heard on the radio—the Red Army of North Korea had crossed the thirty-eighth parallel. I felt sick! Seoul was so close to the border! The frightened faces of my children passed quickly before my eyes! How I longed to hold them all tight in my arms, assuring them of protection!

Won Young tried to comfort me as we walked together to the hospital lobby and turned on the radio. An excited newscaster was describing the Red Army rolling south on tanks while the unprepared South Korean Army withdrew defenselessly. My hope sank. Before I had left Korea, there had been small guerilla actions along the thirty-eighth parallel, but never in such large numbers, supported by tanks and artillery!

Won Young gave me a small radio, mended here and there with adhesive tape. An intern who had been his roommate had left it after he had finished training. I took it to my room and sat, as if I were nailed to it, for hours. That night I fell asleep on top of the bedspread and dreamed I was running all over Seoul with my children, trying to hide them from evil-faced invaders.

Three days later President Truman, with the support of the United Nations, ordered United States air and naval forces to help defend South Korea. My husband and I were relieved and grateful. Now the Communists would be pushed back in a few days. To our horror, however, the invaders continued to advance farther and farther south. Every day I looked at the newspaper maps showing the shrinking South Korean line. My home in Seoul, my three children, *were already far behind the enemy line!*

During the bombardment of Seoul I thought constantly of the two large storage tanks of the Yong-San Gas Company, not far from my home and the children. If only one bomb exploded in that area, the fire from the gas tanks would swallow that entire section. I could neither eat nor study.

How understanding and kind was everyone at the hospital! The student nurses did what they could to make me feel better. Mr. Richard L. Davies, president of the hospital's Board of Trustees called me often to ask if there was anything he could do to help. Miss Helen J. Leader, the thoughtful director of nurses, brought me a package of children's underwear and vitamin pills, telling me to send them home as soon as I could. She reassured me by saying that she had made up the package because she was sure the children were all right. The unforgettable hospital chaplain, Dr. Joseph Britan, stopped by the dormitory every afternoon to strengthen me with faith and hope. A warm-hearted couple, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred P. Kitchen, who were associated with the hospital, took me for automobile rides and invited me to their beautiful home for week-ends, trying to make me forget the war, even if it could be only for a short while.

Letters from home had ceased to arrive by that time, and enemy troops had captured nearly all South Korea except the small area around the city of Pusan. However, my daily duties at the hospital had to go on. Won Young left for the children's summer camp, and I remained behind to make up time I had lost.

As soon as my examinations were completed, I left for Washington, D.C., to visit the Korean Embassy, hoping to receive more detailed news of the war. It was early evening when I got off the train at Union Station near the Capitol. I was in no hurry to go anywhere. I could not visit the Embassy until the next morning. As I walked along, my head filled with worry and turmoil, an evening breeze

brought cool comfort. The Capitol dome, shedding its soft lights, towered gracefully against the dusky sky. All at once, I was overwhelmed. I put my bag down on a stone wall and closed my eyes as I leaned against a tree. There, for a minute, I voiced to myself the thoughts that poured from my heart! So fast, so close together rushed those thoughts that they made little sense, but I let them flow anyway. When I was calmer, I prayed that God's wisdom and grace be revealed through American help to the long-suffering Korean people.

The next morning I went to the Korean Embassy. Ambassador Chang, a good friend of my sister-in-law, greeted me with a warm smile. Quickly, I asked if he had heard any news of my family.

He answered, "I have been doing everything possible to get official news about the people stranded in Seoul. My parents and children are also there. But, so far, I have no reliable information, simply rumors." He paused for a moment then, and added, "Don't pay too much attention to rumors."

Later, I understood what the ambassador had meant. A clerk at the Embassy told me he had heard that many South Korean government officials and well-known people in Seoul had been taken prisoner and had been shot to death. He added, with a grim expression, that my father-in-law and oldest sister-in-law were among those on the list of names.

For a minute everything turned black. The clerk led me to a chair and handed me a cup of tea. What about my mother-in-law and the children?" I pleaded. "Please tell me all you have heard. I must know."

The clerk said that he knew nothing more, and said he was sorry to have spoken.

The next day I visited all the Koreans I knew or had heard of in Washington, asking for any information they could give me. The rumors they had heard were very gloomy. The names of many people I knew were mentioned among

those who had been captured. I was told that the families of those who had been captured had been driven from their homes and all their belongings had been confiscated. I could not bear it any longer.

That night I returned to Philadelphia where I prepared to go to Won Young's camp the following morning. As soon as I saw him, I told him what I had heard. Tears welled up in his eyes, and after a while, he mumbled, "This is a birthday to remember for the rest of my life."

It was August 4, his birthday, the first such occasion since we had been together again. Before I went to Washington I had planned to surprise Won Young by visiting the camp with a picnic luncheon. I had made arrangements with a girl friend to use her kitchen to cook some of our native dishes. After my trip to Washington, I was so disturbed that I had completely forgotten his birthday. All that I had brought him was tragic news!

Won Young's summer job was at Camp Cherrydale, located among the beautiful hills near Chester, Pennsylvania. Nearby were many apple trees, and now red and gold summer apples were strewn all over the pasture. No one ever bothered to pick them up. Every morning while I was there I went to the orchard and gathered fresh-dropped apples, still moist with morning dew, remembering the village children with whom I used to play in Kom-Pawi. I thought of the fun we used to have gathering apples back home, the athletic contests in which everyone strove so hard to win three green apples for the first prize, two for the second prize and one for the third prize. I recalled the innocent and contented faces of those children, though they wore patched and repatched cotton clothes and were often without shoes. I said to myself, Those years, in spite of poverty, were the golden age for them.

Much hardship has followed those people. At that very moment, I thought, the boys with whom I had played might

be dead or wounded in a war whose purpose was unknown to them. I thought, too, of their children and pictured their frightened faces when they were left alone at home after their fathers had been drafted and their mothers had gone to work in the fields.

For a moment my imagination was captured by a wishful scene—a truckful of Korean children were being let off in that beautiful, green Pennsylvania pasture. They were all running toward the red and golden apples scattered on the ground; they were shouting and hailing one another with joy. Some bit eagerly into the apples, while others busily filled their pockets, thinking of their mothers and sisters at home. Then, as I really looked down the hill and saw American children in their colorful bathing suits, splashing in the crystal blue water, singing and laughing, I mumbled, "This surely cannot be in the same world as Korea. It must be at least halfway to heaven!"

The apple trees of Kom-Pawi had borne bitter fruit indeed!

I soon found these children very much like Korean children. Though their skin, their color of hair, length of nose, depth of eyes, and their clothing, were different, their minds worked in the same way. They were eager to love and to be loved, they wanted to please their leaders, were quick in response to joy and sadness, and sought constantly but unconsciously for affection and security. When I taught them Korean folk songs and told them Korean fairy stories, they listened and learned with enthusiasm. The desire to learn, to love and to be loved, belongs to *all* children, no matter where they are born or by what system their elders have chosen to live!

A week passed in that peaceful camp. I had time to think things over calmly. One fact was clear. If my children were safe somewhere, they would be without any means of support. My parents had been refugees since 1945 and had a

large family of their own. If my father-in-law and his eldest daughter actually had been taken prisoner, my aged mother-in-law and the three children were helplessly alone and had nowhere to turn, for Won Young's other sisters were also away from Korea. One was in London, the other in Michigan.

Something had to be done. I persuaded Won Young to continue his studies—they were more important than mine—and in the middle of August I decided I must return to Washington where I could have better contact with the Korean Embassy and the United States military personnel. I would stay there until I located the children. Then I would find some way to get back to them, or would have them brought to this country.

When I explained the situation to the personnel at the hospital, everyone was understanding and kind. Mr. Davies, the president of the board, went out of his way to tell me of his concern. He gave me his telephone number, both at home and at his office, and told me to call him any time if he could possibly help.

I said good-by to my friends at the nursing school in Philadelphia. The hospital chaplain, Dr. Britan, prayed for me and for the safety of my children. While driving me to the station, our good friend Mrs. Kitchen said, "I don't know much about cutting red tape and bringing the children over, but there is one thing I can do. I'd like to lend you the money to pay for their passage if they are allowed to come."

This woman had known me only four months, and neither she nor I had any idea when Won Young and I would be able to pay her back. Her trust in me and her immeasurable generosity so overwhelmed me I could find no words to thank her.

Chapter 12

MY MONTHS IN THE CAPITAL

WHEN I returned to Washington in the middle of August many Koreans had already received letters from those who had managed to get out of Seoul. Now, I was certain that the children and their grandparents had not been able to flee. Surely, if they had, I would have heard from them. I did hear from Mr. Edmond F. Burke in Pusan, who said that he had found my mother there among the refugees. He said he knew nothing of my children, but he intended to return to Seoul to look for them as soon as the United Nations troops captured the city. A letter from my mother was enclosed in his, saying that she was in a refugee camp in Pusan with her younger children. She had been separated from my father, who had been away from home on a business trip when the war started, and she had fled to Pusan with her younger children, leaving everything behind her again. She added that, although she could have written me sooner, she had not been able to bring herself to write when she could not give me news of my own children.

Mr. Burke and his wife had been our good friends when

I lived in Seoul. He had come there with the Economic Cooperation Administration as an adviser on railroad operations in Korea. When the war broke out, he and his wife had lost everything and were evacuated to Japan. His wife returned to the States, but Mr. Burke went back to Pusan, and from there he followed the troops to Seoul when the capital city was recovered by the United Nations forces. While the war seesawed across Korea, Mr. Burke patiently and tirelessly played hide-and-seek with my family. He did his best to locate them, and he wrote me frequently, even though he, himself, was exposed to great danger. He supplied my mother, and later my children, with canned food and rice at his own expense. For many days he walked miles and miles among the crowds, through the dusty streets, looking for my family.

As soon as I heard from Mr. Burke I sent him a package of vitamin pills and other necessary items, asking him if he would deliver it to my mother. I also asked him to give money and anything else she needed to my mother-in-law if he should locate her, saying that I would pay him back in the States through his wife. For delivery to my mother-in-law, when and if she was found safe, I enclosed a letter assuring her of my prompt return as soon as the way was open. I made maps of Seoul, showing the location of our home, and sent them to every American soldier in Korea whose name and mailing address I happened to know. With these maps, I enclosed postal money orders, asking each recipient to wire me if the children were located.

Then I waited. Helped by many friends, I managed to support myself. On September 15, the United Nations forces made an amphibious landing at Inchon, behind the North Korean lines. An air of excitement prevailed in Washington. Now I was optimistic, but more tense than ever, and almost afraid of receiving news. I felt as if I were standing in front of a judge, waiting for a verdict.

Another month of anxious days and nights ticked slowly by.

On October 20, four long months after the outbreak of war, I received a letter from my mother-in-law in Seoul! This was enclosed in a letter from Mr. Burke. I saw the handwriting, read the first sentence—"Thank God, the children are safe."

Right there, on the front porch where I had torn open the letter, I knelt and wept! I mumbled the children's names and thanked God. I don't remember what I said, but I thanked Him in Korean, in Japanese and in English—in all the languages I knew, and with all the words that came to me. Then I pulled myself together and read the rest of the letter. It confirmed the rumor that my father-in-law and sister-in-law had been taken away by the Red Army soon after Seoul had been captured. They were both regarded as pro-American, and imprisoned.

My mother-in-law told me that our home was now occupied by the Red Army, and that, although our belongings had been confiscated, she, the maid, and the three children had been allowed to remain in one of the small rooms. She urged me not to return home as yet, saying that having a young woman around would only make things worse.

Mr. Burke wrote that the children were looking well, though they needed haircuts. He said he had given my mother-in-law my letter, some money and some canned food. He also tried to comfort me by saying that he would look after them. His long, detailed letter described how he had finally found my children.

After receiving the package I had sent to Pusan, he had walked through the crowded streets all day looking for my mother. At the end of the exhausting search, he heard that she had left for Seoul in search of my father. Mr. Burke then followed the United Nations forces advancing on

Seoul, and, after crossing the Han River, he went straight to my home. He told of his joy at seeing my mother-in-law and the three children run toward him when he opened the front door, and of his sorrow on learning the fate of my father-in-law and his daughter. Mr. Burke had carried my package all the way to Seoul, and intended to continue his search for my mother and father. I will never, never be able to thank him enough for such devotion!

While I had been waiting for news, I had made contact with the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, as well as the Far Eastern Section of the State Department, seeking a possible way to bring the children into this country, once they were located. I had also spoken with many of the personnel in the United States military services in an effort to learn how I might return to Seoul on a transport. Everyone with whom I spoke was understanding and helpful, despite the fact that I did not, personally, know any of these important people. To them I must have been simply a bothersome young oriental woman speaking in broken English. They all had problems of their own. They were sending American boys to the Korean battleground day after day, and many heartsick American mothers must have been calling them, too. My children and I comprised just one of hundreds of thousands of Korean families stricken by war. Yet everyone, including Immigration Service officials, opened his heart and shared his busy time to help me find a solution to my problem.

In the minds of many aliens in this country, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service officials had a reputation for being like the Japanese police. I did not find them that way at all. As individuals, they were no different from other Americans I knew. When I explained my situation to them, they were eager to help. In fact, it was one of these officials who found a way for us to bring the chil-

dren to this country, after spending a whole morning with me in his office, studying the regulations. I said to myself, "This is surely a blessed nation!"

After being told the regulations, Won Young started procedure to change his temporary status in the States to a permanent one through the United States Consulate in Montreal. Won Young had to become a permanent resident before the children would be allowed to join us here. Dr. Stuart Mudd, of the University of Pennsylvania, who had been so understanding all along, helped speed the process.

In the meantime, I had applied for a translator's position through all possible channels, hoping to be sent to Korea. Now, we had done everything within our power and wisdom. We waited in readiness to take whichever course opened first.

As the United Nations forces were now rapidly advancing into North Korea, we were sure that the war was near an end. I received a letter from my father. He had been in Seoul when the war broke out, and had lost the chance to escape before the Han River Bridge was blown up. He spent months hiding in a cave until the United Nations forces re-entered the city. In spite of everything, he was unharmed and had been finally reunited with my mother. Although two of my brothers were missing, my father hoped to locate them soon. He thanked me for the package, and seemed very excited at the thought of returning to our home town, now in the hands of the United Nations troops. Evidently he intended to follow the Allied lines northward, for he wrote, "By the time you receive this letter, I will have eaten my first meal in Kom-Pawi."

On November 2, the day I received my father's letter, and only two weeks after I learned of my children's safety, large troops of Communist Chinese came to the aid of North Korea. Russian-built jet planes were put into action

and Allied troops began to withdraw from their advance positions. Constant bombing in the Seoul area was reported again. Residents who had once been caught behind the enemy line started moving rapidly southward, determined not to be captured again. The Chinese offensive continued to gain momentum until it reached full strength toward the end of November. Allied lines withdrew rapidly. In Washington there were rumors that this time the United Nations forces might be evacuated to Japan, abandoning even Pusan.

Once again I became frantic. I wired everyone I could think of in Seoul, asking them to help evacuate my children and their grandmother to the south, following the Allied line. If they were caught behind the enemy line again I would lose my mind. I continued to write many letters to Americans, begging them to take my children and their grandmother to the south, even to Japan if they were forced to abandon Pusan. Somehow, some day, I promised to return my thanks to these people. I tried everything to speed the procedure that would bring the children to the United States. Some days I rode in a taxicab with a telephone directory in my lap, visiting every department listed under United States Government, wherever I thought someone might be interested in my problem.

I phoned Mr. Davies and Dr. Mudd in Philadelphia at all hours. Both men answered my calls with the warmest understanding, always telling the operator to reverse the charges as soon as they heard my voice. They did everything possible to help me get my children here. At their own expense, they wired to Korea, to Washington, to the United States Consulate in Canada. Won Young and I will never forget our deep gratitude to these men. They are a constant inspiration to us both.

Won Young still studies late into the night. He says that the only way he can show his gratitude to those wonderful

people is to continue to study hard, so that some day, with God's help, he may do something worthwhile for the whole human race. He thinks that we are already indebted to too many people to be able to thank them individually.

Because of the help of so many persons, the first batch of papers we needed to secure passports for the children and their grandmother was ready near the end of December. I filled in three copies of each. One set I sent to the Foreign Office of the South Korean government in Seoul. The second was sent to Mr. Burke, and the third to my mother-in-law, with detailed directions enclosed. I even made passport-sized pictures of the children and my mother-in-law from old snapshots. Regulations required the applicant's photograph to be taken recently, but I thought that during the seesawing war any pictures would do. I sent them all off, and waited. Weeks passed without a word from anyone.

In the meanwhile I got a job with the United States Army Map Service translating Korean maps. As the enemy attack grew stronger every day, the United Nations troops continued to withdraw all along the line. The Communists had crossed the thirty-eighth parallel again by Christmas. They started a new attack against Seoul on New Year's Eve. Ten days later Seoul was once more abandoned by the Allies. I prayed, and our many friends prayed with us that the children and their grandmother would be evacuated to the south. As long as they were not left behind the enemy lines, they could be located. Papers could be revised, and the children could still be brought safely to this country.

On January 20 a letter came from Mr. Burke, a month after I had sent the first papers. He had received these and my letter when he was about to leave for Pusan. During a heavy bombardment he had gone to my home with the documents. My children and their grandmother were gone. The neighbors said that they had left for Pusan. Mr. Burke assured me he would look for them as soon as he reached

there. At least, I knew they had started south. I prayed that they would arrive safely and find shelter, for they knew no one in that city, and I had been told of the extremely crowded housing situation.

It was not long before South Korea had been captured by the Communists—every square mile except the small area around the Pusan port. With the dreadful memory of being caught behind the enemy line still vivid in their minds, everyone who could possibly do so poured into Pusan.

Newspapers carried pictures of large crowds of homeless people wandering around Pusan looking for shelter—children clad in rags, without shoes, trying to find a patch of sun as they shivered and blew on their hands to warm them; elderly men with small bundles on their backs, leaning on their canes, with no place to go; women with several small children clinging to their skirts and babies tied to their backs.

There were pictures of refugees in flight, taking shelter under bridges, riding in trains so overloaded that many sat on the roofs, trucks so jammed that children hung onto the sides.

I ached at not being able to be with my children. Night after night in my dreams I searched desperately for them among the refugees, under bridges, in overpacked trains and in the confusion of crowded streets.

Another month passed. More news came from Mr. Burke. He had located my family in Pusan. They were safe and had a small room there!

During those hectic days Won Young made a trip to the United States Consulate in Montreal and had fulfilled the requirements for bringing the children to the United States. A second batch of papers was sent to Pusan. It took another whole month to hear that more papers still were required. Endless correspondence continued across the Pacific Ocean. In July, 1951, a year after the outbreak of war, everything was completed, and the three children were ready with pass-

ports and visas to come to the United States of America.

Many times I had been so discouraged I was tempted to give up and to return to Korea, just to hold the children in my arms, regardless of what the future might bring. But I strongly believed that if God wished me to return without any means of helping them, He would not have enabled my father-in-law to succeed in his last task of sending me to this country, only three months before he was imprisoned. I felt that it was now my task to bring his remaining family to safety, and I knew that in this God-believing country, if I kept knocking on the door, some day it would be opened for us. And it was!

Chapter 13

REUNION

MANY friends had prayed for us, and many had helped in such a variety of ways! Surely God had listened to those prayers, for it was, indeed, a miracle that the three children had been so well protected through the tragic war months and the evacuation. It was difficult to believe that the complicated procedure of getting permission for the children to come to the United States took place through correspondence only, or that the involved formalities were carried out by an aged grandmother who could neither read nor understand English.

There still remained one great problem: How were those three small children, aged three to five and a half, to make the journey across the Pacific Ocean alone? In spite of everything we could do, their grandmother's visa to the States was refused. She was not, according to the immigration laws, regarded as a member of Won Young's direct family. The children had to travel by themselves.

The air line that would bring them to this country told me that children under eight could not travel unless accompanied by an elder. I still wanted to return to Korea myself

and bring them back with me, but this would have required nearly \$2,000, so I gathered my courage and wrote a long letter to Mr. Sam Wyman, General Manager of the Northwest Airlines in St. Paul, Minnesota, explaining the situation. He replied with kindness and understanding, promising to help find a way to bring the children here. He got in touch with the air line offices in Washington, Japan and Pusan, to see if a passenger could be found who would interpret between the children and the air line hostesses. If the children's needs could be understood, the air line would be willing to take care of them during the long flight. There were, at that time, two flights weekly from Pusan to the United States, but one of them required a two-day stay in Japan to make connections. This was not advisable for three children without an escort. On the other flight, planes were always booked full from Pusan to Japan. When seats were available for the three children, the air line could not find an interpreter, and when an interpreter was found, they could not provide seats for the children. This went on for three months, and the air line people even attempted to send a Korean-speaking employee, at their own expense, to escort the children back. Mr. John Hanton, the Sales Manager at the Washington office, called me almost every day.

Then, on Sunday morning, October 7, 1951, the telephone rang while I was getting ready to go to church. It was Mr. Hanton.

"Mrs. Koh!" he said excitedly, "the children are on their way."

I could not believe my ears. Choked by tears, I could not speak. Sensing my emotion, Mr. Hanton told me he would call me back in a little while. When he did, he said that they had finally found a Korean woman who was coming to Boston, and who would look after the children during the trip. The plane, with the children aboard, had already left Japan and was on its way across the Pacific Ocean!

That same afternoon Mr. Hanton called again, advising me to go to Minneapolis to meet the children there. Since the plane had been delayed, the children would have to stay overnight in Minneapolis before making the final flight to Washington.

I therefore packed a suitcase with candies and toys which I had been saving, together with coats and warm clothing I had made for the children. Already I had sent three sets of summer clothing for them to wear on their trip, with name tags sewed on them. These tags bore the telephone number of the Korean Embassy and instructions to call that number in case of difficulty. But the summer was over. It was October now, and I knew the children needed warm clothing.

Mr. Wyman, himself, met me at the airport in St. Paul on that Sunday night and he drove me to the hotel in Minneapolis where he had reserved a room for the children and me. Unfortunately, the flight had been delayed longer than expected; it did not get in until eight-thirty the following evening.

The night air was brisk and chilly as I stood by the runway waiting for the plane to arrive. Finally it landed, blinking its tail lights. One by one, the passengers descended. I felt a strong urge to run, but rules were very strict pertaining to planes coming from foreign countries, and the Immigration Service and Customs Office inspection had to be completed before anyone could meet the passengers. I waited inside the fence. At last, three little figures appeared on the steps, holding onto the hands of the airline hostess and the pilot. My heart leaped! As they reached the ground I called out their names.

Kwang-In, the oldest, broke from the pilot's hand and ran toward me, shouting, "That's my mommy!"

I ducked under the fence, ran, and gathered him in my arms.

"Oh, Mommy! Mommy!" he murmured. "I was so worried about Kwang-Eal. He cried so much on the plane, calling for Grandma!"

Kwang-In pressed hard against me, his little cheek wet with tears of relief. He was only five and a half, yet he had assumed the entire responsibility for his younger brother and sister. After he had manfully delivered the message, "Grandma wants you to wire her as soon as you meet us," I called out my younger children's names.

My four-year-old daughter, In-Sung, looked at me, then shouted to her younger brother, "Kwang-Eal, come here! She says she's our mommy."

The three-year-old, Kwang-Eal, held more tightly to the hostess' hand after gazing at me with shy, skeptical eyes. The two younger ones did not remember me at all, and had expected to meet their mama at the next stop. While the children were led into an office for inspection, the pilot and the hostess came out to greet me, telling me how well the children had behaved during the trip. I thanked them both for their kindness and good care, and when the children were allowed to come out, I helped them on with the coats which I had brought for them. Warm now, and less shy, the two younger ones pressed their faces tight against my cheek as I folded them in my arms.

We sent wires to their grandmother in Pusan and to their daddy in Philadelphia, then finally Mr. Wyman drove us to the hotel.

As we rode from the airport, the children exclaimed with delight each time we passed an elaborately lighted neon sign. Since all three of them had been born after the thirty-eighth parallel cut off electricity from South Korea, they had been brought up in darkness. So impressed was the three-year-old Kwang-Eal, that he claimed all the lights to be his, insisting he had seen them first, while the two older children tried to convince him that this was not true.

Amid arguments and excitement, we arrived at the hotel. Mr. Wyman, who had been so thoughtful and kind, wished us good luck before he drove off.

When we entered the hotel room a basket of beautifully wrapped candies which was decorated with an American flag was waiting on top of a dresser. The card attached read, Welcome three little Kohs to America. The manager of the hotel had heard our story and sent us this gift.

That night we had much to talk about. Everyone wanted to tell me his own story first. The children described how their room in Pusan compared with this hotel room; how hard the trip from Seoul to Pusan had been; how little Kwang-Eal had wanted to keep their small ration of food all for himself.

As the stories became complicated, each child cut in to make corrections. The eldest, Kwang-In, told briefly of how his grandfather had disappeared. The day before this had happened, Dr. Koh had been out treating the wounded of both armies—including nineteen North Koreans—and he was very tired when he reached home. Next morning the North Koreans came to the house, saying they wanted him to attend a ceremony.

"He never came back, Mommy!" Kwang-In said. "If I had known it that day, I would have looked and looked at him very much!"

Kwang-In's lips trembled as he was telling me this. He also described their bus trip from Seoul to Yong-Dung-Po, where they had boarded a train to Pusan. So desperately was everyone trying to flee south that the buses were horribly crowded, and no passenger was allowed to carry more than one small bundle. His grandmother, endeavoring to take as many needed things as possible, had made a small bundle for Kwang-In to carry, too. It contained mostly his underwear, but in the center of the bundle, he had wrapped the binoculars his grandfather had given him on his birth-

day. He had held onto the bundle desperately as he was pushed by the crowds, but a sudden strong jerk wrenched it from his hand. Before he knew it, the bundle had slipped to the ground and was stepped on and smashed. That was how the last treasured gift from his grandfather had been lost!

When the children had finished their stories, they examined the room, jumped up and down on the bouncy beds, and turned the electric light switches on and off. After a warm bath, they finally settled in the beds and I tucked each one in with a prayer and a hug. How very much I had longed for that moment!

No sooner were we all quiet, with the lights out, than I heard gentle weeping from my little girl, In-Sung.

When I knelt by her bed and asked her what was the matter, she answered in very sad tones, "I feel so sorry for Grandma and Ohkees'-Mom" (the maid who stayed with them all through the war). "They were crying so much when we left."

With that, the two boys also burst into tears. I did not attempt to stop them. I confess that I wept, myself. We sobbed until our tears were dry and we were exhausted. And when we had no more strength we stared at one another, feeling rather foolish. Then we embraced and slowly began to smile. With a new-found closeness, our hearts were light for the first time.

After we had settled in our beds again, Kwang-In said, "Mommy! When I grow up, I will become famous and bring Grandma and Okhees'-Mom to America."

The next morning we flew to Washington. It was a beautiful autumn day. Tired by the long journey, the children fell asleep on the plane. I watched their peaceful faces and then looked down at the white clouds passing beneath the plane. I felt the closeness of God's presence and His love, and I bowed my head in thankful prayer!

As the plane landed at the National Airport in Washington, I looked out the window. There, waiting to see the happy ending to our story, stood our wonderful friends—the many Americans who had done everything in their power to make this reunion possible; the understanding people from the Korean Embassy who so patiently helped me with details of the complicated procedure; the warm-hearted Korean minister, Taimook Kim, and his wife, who had given me so much comfort and faith through those terrible days that finally culminated in such a happy reunion.

Won Young was allowed to come to the plane and help bring the children down. It had been over three years since they had last seen their father. Kwang-In remembered him and hugged him eagerly, while the two younger children hid their faces against my skirt. Won Young was a total stranger to them.

While we were meeting and greeting all of the welcoming friends, one of them asked little Kwang-Eal, "Who is he?" and pointed to Won Young.

After a brief hesitation the child answered, "Dr. Fitch."

Everyone laughed, but I felt a hard lump in my throat. How kind this Dr. Fitch must have been to them, I thought. Dr. George A. Fitch, director of the YMCA in Pusan, had taken over all communications between the children and me after Mr. Burke had returned to the States. Thereafter, Dr. Fitch had looked out for the children right up to the moment of their departure, when he took them to the airport in his jeep.

Colonel C. H. Donnelly, who had once lived in Korea, and his charming wife, invited us to stay in their beautiful Georgetown house until Won Young and I were ready to start a normal family life together in Philadelphia. Their own children were away at college, and though they were not used to having little ones around, they had rearranged

their furniture to provide us with comfortable rooms. Mrs. Donnelly even took a week off from her work and drove us around to see all the memorable sights in Washington. We had picnics at the Washington Zoo. We visited the Capitol and the Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials. Kwang-In can still draw detailed pictures of these structures from memory, so deeply were they impressed in his mind during those first few days in the city.

We remained with the Donnellys for an entire month. Won Young had to find an apartment for us and I had to complete my work. While I was waiting to move to Philadelphia, friends advised me to continue working in Washington until Won Young had finished his schooling. This would take another full year, and I was well aware of the financial difficulties we would be facing when I joined him with the three children. I liked my work very much and had made good friends at the Army Map Service, especially with the Personnel Director, Mr. B. C. Hull, who had been extremely sympathetic and helpful.

Ladies from the Friends Meeting offered us a home and promised to provide a baby sitter for the children so that I could continue working.

Although I was deeply grateful for everyone's thoughtful concern, I was determined to provide a normal home for the children as soon as possible. They needed security and the loving affection of both parents. Already they had suffered too many separations, too many harrowing scenes of war and the insecurity of refugee life. And they had gone through all this before reaching school age. Now was the time to give my children a real home, I thought. I could baby-sit for other working mothers instead of having them look after my little ones.

Chapter 14

OUR FIRST HOME IN AMERICA

WE moved into our new home with a box spring, a mattress, a kitchen table, five chairs, and some hurriedly-bought cooking utensils. Our apartment, on Fortieth Street in Philadelphia, faced the clinic of the University of Pennsylvania School of Dentistry across a narrow alley. An old wooden trolley car passed by our front door, rattling and grinding. Still, the rent was reasonable and we were within walking distance of Won Young's school. The brick building, owned by the University, was over a hundred years old. It had been converted for multiple uses: the ground floor being a laboratory. The second floor was occupied by the manager of the laboratory, while we had the entire third floor. Our apartment contained many rooms connected by a dark hallway nearly half a block long. All of the rooms were very large; they included a living room, three bedrooms, a bath, a dining room, and, finally, a kitchen at the end of the hall.

Kwang-In was amazed at the size of the rooms which he examined with enthusiasm, exclaiming, "Why, this place

is large enough for ten more families! Why don't we bring some people from Pusan?"

Kwang-Eal, who had enjoyed playing in the beautiful back yard of Colonel Donnelly's home in Washington, looked out of the window and remarked, "The scenery is bad," while In-Sung contentedly straddled the tricycle which had been waiting for them in the hall. It turned out that Won Young had bought the "bike" just before we arrived, for the first thing Kwang-In reported when he met his father was that his tricycle had been taken away.

For the first few days Won Young and I slept on the box spring while the children slept sidewise on the mattress. During the day they amused themselves by riding the tricycle through the long hallway and the large, empty rooms. Not having many clothes to put away, we soon discovered that the closets were ideal for games of hide-and-seek. And when we had visitors the children ran down the half-block-long corridor, dragging chairs from the kitchen to the bare living room.

The second day after our arrival I was dumbfounded to see Won Young return home with a new vacuum cleaner.

"Let's not make any more dust," he said. "The children have already swallowed too much."

I knew that he had spent his last dollar for what he considered an essential item. Won Young was, after all, a doctor specializing in bacteriology.

Before the week was over Mrs. Kitchen came to see us, bringing a truckload of beds, bedding and kitchen utensils.

That year we had a most memorable Christmas. It began when a huge tree was given to us by the student nurses at the University of Pennsylvania. Having celebrated their Christmas before going home for the holiday vacation, the nurses wanted us to have the tree after December 23. It

was beautiful—ceiling-high and thick with shiny needles. We put it in the middle of our empty living room.

The children were very excited and clapped their hands as the tree rose tall, touching the ceiling. Lacking fancy ornaments, the children decorated it with enthusiasm, covering the branches with cards, small plastic toys, threaded popcorn and tinsel. If it wasn't the prettiest tree in the world, it was certainly the happiest one.

On Christmas Eve, after the children had finally been settled in their beds, Won Young and I placed our presents under the tree. These were not much—small, inexpensive toys—yet each was wrapped with loving care. Together, we knelt beneath the tree and bowed our heads in thanksgiving. How long we had dreamed of a Christmas like this!

Then we thought of the less fortunate children in Korea, shivering with cold and hungry for food. We thought of the American boys on the Korean battlefield, so far from their homes on that Christmas Eve. My mind turned especially to their mothers, who in fantasy must be traveling the unknown mountainsides along muddy paddy fields in search of their beloved sons that very night.

Early on Christmas morning, before the children were up, our doorbell rang. Won Young and I ran down the steps. There stood a real Santa Claus—Dr. Britan, with his assistant Miss Buchanan, bearing a large boxful of gifts. These were from our many friends at the hospital. The chaplain and Miss Buchanan promised to return later in the day, but would not stay then because they wanted the children to believe that the gifts had been delivered by Santa Claus. As we were struggling with the box on the stairway, the children, who had been awakened by the noise, ran down the hall.

"Look," we called out, "Santa Claus brought all these gifts for you."

What happy excitement there was as they ran down the steps! What delightful commotion as we pulled the large box up the stairway!

Won Young and I sat by the tree and watched the children unwrapping their gifts, exclaiming with joy and shouting to one another, running back and forth to show us their finds and digging eagerly into the box for the endless packages. Before long the room was covered with colorful paper. Ribbons and toys were scattered everywhere. We were literally in Wonderland! It was the most wonderful Christmas imaginable, and its memory will be cherished the rest of our lives.

That memorable afternoon Dr. Britan returned. The children, who had adored their grandfather, exhibited immediate affection for the chaplain. They showed him everything they had received, eagerly explaining that Santa Claus had brought the lovely gifts. From that day on, Dr. Britan assumed the role of their grandfather. Often he would stop to see us on his way home from the hospital. The children knew what time he would come to visit and would run down the stairs, pushing and jostling, when the doorbell rang. Then followed a series of hugs and an exchange of happy greetings. Though they did not understand each other's language, this did not seem to bother the loving "grandfather" and the happy children. They would report the day's happenings in Korean, while the chaplain would comment in English on each report. Curiously enough, those conversations all seemed to make sense.

Dr. Britan also introduced our family to his church in Lansdowne, a suburb of Philadelphia, with the result that warmhearted parishioners never stopped ringing our bell and bringing gifts until every room in our apartment was comfortably furnished.

Because the arrival of our children had been reported in the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, many strangers came to see us

bringing useful things. Among those visitors were mothers whose sons were in Korea on the front line. The fact that we, who were Koreans, were safe, while American boys were in danger fighting for our country, hurt my conscience. It was we who should be trying to comfort the Americans and do something for them, yet they wanted to help us!

So our first home in America started with heart-warming gratitude for the kindnesses of many, many friends. Won Young and I tried our best to maintain this happy atmosphere. The children had already seen so much sorrow and so many tragic sights! In material things—clothing and toys—we could not afford to keep up with American families, but we could shower our children with tender love and surround them with a cheerful atmosphere. It was not always easy.

Won Young's schedule was heavy. He went to school all day, worked until nine at night, and wrote his thesis after ten. As he was not used to such a strenuous life, he became increasingly tired and irritable. He could only work part-time, and the pay barely covered rent and food. I did everything I could, from baby-sitting and shoe-mending to selling cards and making dolls, but we were often without the smallest necessities.

To save money, I cut everyone's hair, including my husband's. I remember the first haircut I gave to Won Young. Despite the time and effort I put into it, several spots were obviously too light. In desperation, I picked up a piece of black crayon and started to rub the light spots. At that, the children laughed so hard they all but rolled on the floor, but the effect was surprisingly satisfactory. Now my family thinks my haircuts are quite professional.

Not long ago, we were discussing our financial difficulties, and Kwang-Eal, who was then eight, came out with a brilliant suggestion.

"Mommy!" he said, "why don't we put up a sign in front of our house, saying, Children's Haircut at Half Price?"

I made nearly all of our clothes. We were constantly supplied by our friends with used clothing, and if an article was too big, I made it smaller; if it was too small, I took out all the seams, or made one dress out of two or three smaller ones. With one suit that was too worn, I took all the seams apart, then turned the material inside out. This involved a great deal of work, but when finished, the suit looked almost new, the only difference being that the small upper pocket was on the right side instead of the left. We said to ourselves, "We will pretend this is Korean style." I tackled everything—the children's winter coats, my dresses, and Won Young's shirts and trousers. I did not attempt to make Won Young's suits. I was afraid that the student nurses he taught might not be able to concentrate on their studies if Won Young entered the classroom with my haircut, at the same time wearing a homemade suit!

We tried to have as much fun as we could afford. Our favorite pastime was to ride the Escalator at the train station at Thirtieth Street. We sometimes walked the ten blocks to the station with our lunch, and spent nearly the whole day there. When traffic was not heavy the children ran down the steps and rode up on the Escalator. When trains arrived and there were many passengers using the Escalator, we sat on a nearby bench and rested. This was the first time the children had ever seen a moving staircase and it fascinated them.

The children's nine months' stay among the refugees in Pusan had left them with indelible memories. They vividly remembered the sufferings of the homeless and their struggle to survive, even at the lowest depths of poverty. The first few days we were together, their reactions over small things often surprised me and made me ashamed. When we were

preparing to leave the hotel in Minneapolis, for example, I transferred their belongings from the small cardboard box they had carried on the plane to my suitcase. Then, without a thought, I placed the box beside the wastebasket. While we were checking out from the hotel, I noticed that my son was carrying the box.

"Kwang-In," I said, "Let's not take that along."

He gazed at me in surprise and said, "You mean to throw away this good box? Oh, no! Grandmother paid five hundred won for it. If we don't need it, we can send it back to Pusan. There are so many people who could not buy it. They will be very happy to put their clothing in it if you will give it to them."

Much ashamed, I put a string around the box, and he carried it onto the plane.

Whenever the children saw empty cans and jars among the trash, they pulled them out, making such remarks as, "Oh! This jar will be good for storing rice. . . . This can will be good for making dustpans. . . . Look! If this one was flattened out, it would be big enough to repair a leaking roof."

The children wanted to send all empty cans, jars and cardboard boxes to Pusan. Every Monday and Friday morning, before the trash collectors came around in our section, the children went out to the street and brought in all the jars and cans they could find. This presented an embarrassing sight—three small Korean children digging through other people's trash—but I did not stop them. Gradually, I thought, they will forget the suffering they have seen and experienced, and realize that what they collect will not help the poor people in Pusan. But I wanted them to keep their eagerness to share with the less fortunate friends they had left behind and to maintain their appreciation for the value of small things. These were priceless traits the chil-

dren had acquired by going through the painful experience of war and destruction!

Soon all our closets were filled with empty cans and jars, and each time I opened the door they tumbled down with a tremendous clatter. We finally packed them neatly in boxes and stacked them away at the end of the hall, saying that we would send them to Pusan when we found transportation.

The children's favorite recreation was playing dentist. As their bedroom directly faced the all-glass wall of the University of Pennsylvania dental clinic, across a narrow alley, the children could see everything that was going on there. In the beginning I tried to stop them from watching too closely, but there was nothing else to be seen from our windows. The three children made a good team. One would sit on the chair as a patient, while another, wearing daddy's white shirt backward, busied himself with tooth-picks, pincers and a glass of water. The third acted as an announcer, reporting all that was happening at the clinic.

"Now he rinses his mouth . . . now the dentist drills his tooth . . . now he cries. . . ." And so the game went on. The children imitated every action, including loud spells of weeping, as soon as they were reported. Some days this game went on all morning until clinic hour was over.

If we could not afford bus fare to go on picnics we had our picnics at home. We called them Treasure Hunts. When we had something left over from dinner—usually only enough for one—I would put it away in a square enamel container, and after we had filled three or four containers we decided that was the day for a picnic lunch. I would hide three different kinds of dessert, usually candy bars, in different rooms. The leftover food was heated in the containers, and placed, covered, on the kitchen table. Each one of us then selected an individual lunch and ate whatever

was in it. At the end of this meal, I would read directions I had previously prepared and put in my apron pocket. Beef Stew, Find Dessert in Daddy's Room; Fried Fish, Find Dessert in the Living Room; and so on. Then they all ran happily off for the dessert hunt, shouting to one another in great excitement.

I remember the first birthday party we had for my husband. I had been trying hard to save for a party that would include a beautiful cake, cookies and soda, since it was the first chance to celebrate Won Young's birthday with all of us together. Two days earlier, however, I had an unexpected visitor—a Korean student who was lonely and craved native dishes. More than once we had entertained homesick Koreans; they seemed to receive great comfort and relaxation from playing with the children. After providing for this particular student, however, I was penniless until the next payday.

Won Young's birthday was one of the hottest days that summer. All morning, after my husband had left for school, we shook every piggy bank in the house and cashed in all the empty bottles we could find. We had a total of seventy-five cents. Out of this I was supposed to furnish a cake and cool drinks, yet I could not bake at home because our oven never worked. After figuring and refiguring, we walked to the corner grocery store, bought half of a red-ripe watermelon and chilled it in our refrigerator. That evening the children giggled throughout the meal, thinking about lighting the candles we had placed in the watermelon and singing "Happy Birthday to Daddy." The melon was delicious and cool, and it provided much amusement as well.

Thus, a happy though difficult eighteen months passed by. During this time Won Young finished writing his thesis, the children started kindergarten and nursery school, learned to speak English, and gradually forgot the pain of war.

Chapter 15

REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE WAR

MANY nights when I cannot sleep, I think of the terrible war that seesawed across our country, and what it has done to my people. I remember my relatives and friends who have courageously risen up to rebuild their lives from the crumbled ruins. The Korean War was a climax of disaster to a long-suffering and patient land. Though I did not live through it, I followed its every move in constant fear for my children and my family.

Now it is over. Death, fear, separation, loss and destruction are at a halt. The people have crawled out of hiding to look for their scattered families. God's mercy was praised whenever a missing relative was found unhurt, but many grieved the loss of their loved ones. The survivors, however, had to go on living—homes had to be rebuilt and the men had to start earning their livelihoods again. Even now, many continue an almost hopeless struggle trying to find a foothold.

My father has written to tell me of the things that hap-

pened to our relatives and friends, and how they faced their difficulties. Some nights, after reading his letters, I trace back the unpredictable passage of fate.

Nothing has changed my father! He is still optimistic, full of hope and strong faith. He and my mother were reunited when the United Nations forces regained Seoul. He is still working with the refugees.

My older brother, who finally recovered from his long illness, joined the South Korean Army and was taken prisoner by the Red Army. On the other hand, my younger brother, who was attending school in Seoul at the time of the North Korean invasion, was unable to escape and was captured by the Communists. Forced to join the Red Army, he was taken prisoner by the United Nations forces soon afterward!

Following several months of imprisonment by the Red Army, Tai-Bong came home. It was a miracle that he had escaped to safety. When the truce was signed in 1953, Tai-Am also returned home after two years in the United Nations prison camp. Now my family are all together again in Seoul. My father is the principal at Posung Girls' High School and is devoting himself to educating and encouraging homeless girls from the north.

For the first time in her life my mother seems to have found strong inner peace. She had always struggled to hold onto things, hoping to provide better security for her children's future, while my father so generously handed out his worldly goods in all directions. Then, during the war, she experienced the ultimate in loss and destruction as well as the pain of separation. Imagine her overwhelming gratitude when my youngest brother came home at last, completing the reunion of her once-scattered family! It was then she discovered how trivial were all the things with which she had once been concerned! I'm sure nothing can ever disturb the deep peace she has now found, and she

commits her family's future and her own remaining days completely to God's hands.

Two years of captivity in the United Nations prison camp brought a turning point in my younger brother's life. Tai-Am had once been the shy, sensitive, frail little boy who had tried to run away from home to avoid joining the Japanese Army. He had prayed to be allowed to join the Russian Army. How ironic that he should finally get his wish! That he should be forced to join the Red Army, only to find himself fighting against Tai-Bong, for whom he had been ready to risk his life! I cherish the first letter written by Tai-Am after his release from the United Nations prison camp. It read:

"... During my early captivity I was so disillusioned that I questioned God, 'Oh, God! Have you so misunderstood my prayers? I once prayed you to let me join the Russian Army, but this was only because I loved Tai-Bong so much I could not bear the thought of fighting for the Japanese who ruined his health. But not this way, not to fight against my own beloved brother and all my dear friends.'

"As the days went on, I began to realize His plan. He showed clearly that He cared for me and every one of us. I have seen His tender mercy revealed through the righteousness of the United Nations. I have seen the U.N.'s long, hard struggle to save many of my friends and me from forced repatriation to the north, struggles which delayed the return home of their own young soldiers.

"God could not have chosen a better plan for me. There has been no waste since I could not have continued my schooling anyway, and what better protection could I have asked for, so well guarded by the United Nations forces, so generously fed—far better than my father could have been during those tragic years.

"Now at last I am home, and we are all together again. Mother looks older and Father seems a bit weary, but Tai-

Bong is tanned and cheerful once more. Every one of us came through this war unscathed. God has even provided us with a source of relief during this crucial period by leading you, sister, to the United States of America, the most blessed nation of all. . . ."

Now my brother is determined to become a minister.

No political advantage has been gained by this war. It brought disaster and destruction to all. Among my relatives and close friends alone, the casualty list is heartbreakingly long. Many are orphaned, widowed, crippled. Elderly people have been left alone after losing all of their young ones. Homes and possessions have been destroyed and taken away. But the survivors are recovering, raising their heads, each with different reactions. Some have found the meaning of life through their horrifying experiences, while others have been disillusioned. Some have gained strength and self-reliance, while others have broken under the strain.

As I look at the over-all picture, one fact stands out clearly: People who have faith and education recover rapidly when they are allowed to survive. I believe that survival and non-survival is determined by God alone, since life is given by Him. Some lived after facing death ten times, while others died in places of comparative safety. I know of soldiers dying after they had returned home from the battlefield. I know of a Korean boy who was killed in an automobile accident in the United States after surviving the war and overcoming all the obstacles that almost prevented his getting here.

Material possessions do not offer security, especially to people like the Koreans, who live in a country where unexpected storms sweep by constantly. Things that belonged to us yesterday do not belong to us today. Money saved in a bank amounts to nothing when inflation swallows it up. Insurance premiums pay nothing when the company no longer exists. In my own case, since I had not intended to

stay in the United States, I flew from Korea with only a small suitcase. Consequently, my husband and I have nothing left from our cherished past, not even our wedding picture.

Yet faith and education remain with a person as long as he lives. Nothing can take these from him, no matter how strong the wind, no matter what destruction! These gifts surmount all boundaries, whether an Iron Curtain or a Pacific Ocean. If one is permitted to survive, no matter how great his material loss may be, he can always rebuild if he has faith and education. Faith strengthens him and leads the way; education is a tool to help him build.

Now, I pray with all my heart for the surviving young people in Korea: that they may be equipped with faith and have good educations to meet their unpredictable futures. And I pray also for the insight to show me how I may help them.



AGAIN . . . MY CHRISTMAS LIST

Six years have gone by since the arrival of our three children in this blessed land. My husband and I have made more and more friends each year. Won Young has a good research position, and we have finally managed to bring his mother to us. With Won Young's mother's help, I went to school for a few years to refresh my home economics training, and have been working as a dietitian. Our three children are growing up to be fine individuals—happy, healthy and well-adjusted. Last year we built a beautiful home in New Jersey. Its foundation was reinforced by the love and kindness of our many friends.

Now that all is going so well, one would think it was time for others to stop helping us, and that it is our turn to help them. Yet, every day we are showered with favors. Neighbors helped us during the construction of our home, bringing coffee to us when we worked late; our next door neighbors lent us water and electricity until our own were connected. Church members have tried to make us feel at

home in this new community; teachers have patiently helped the children become acquainted and adjusted to their new school; friendly parents have invited the children to their homes for parties; the people with whom Won Young and I work are so considerate; even the local librarian calls so promptly to notify us of the arrival of books we request.

I remember the day I went to the hospital where I have been working, to tidy up my desk and to say good-by to my friends. Everyone there wished me a good rest and speedy recovery. Among the well-wishers was the doctor who had been treating me for the past few months, whom I had bothered often, and even called on Thanksgiving morning. Always, he responded with patience and understanding. There was the thoughtful administrator, who told me to take good care of myself, saying that my first loyalty must be for myself and the happiness of my family. Then, there was the understanding dietary staff, so wholeheartedly wishing me a good rest, even though my sudden vacation meant extra work and trouble for them, especially during the holiday season. One of the patients who had been lying in pain month after month, still wished me luck.

Perhaps, topping this list of well-wishers should be my helpers in the kitchen, who said, "We will miss you very much. Come back to us soon!" And with them, I had lost my temper so often!

To mention all the names would require another book, and my vacation is almost over. How shall I ever be able to finish making my Christmas list?

